

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

STRANDED IN THE GOLD FIELDS.
OR, THE TREASURE OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND. *BY A SELF-MADE MAN.*



"Now, then," said Redlaw to Fred with a grin, "yer see what's before yer. If yer get through that gantlet uninjured yer're free to go where yer please." The boy looked at the ominous lane to be traversed, and shuddered

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Stranded In the Gold Fields

OR, THE TREASURE OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—For the Sake of a Girl.

"So yonder is Hobart Town?" said Fred Sinclair, a stalwart, good-looking American boy, to Harley Thorpe, a young Englishman, as the pair stood on the deck of the steamer which had brought them from Melbourne, Australia, to the southeastern coast of the island of Tasmania, formerly known as Van Diemen's Land.

"Yes," replied Thorpe, "that is Hobart Town."

They were steaming up Adventure Bay, a considerable sized body of water, and Fred gazed with great interest on the capital and chief city of the British colony. It was situated at the base of Mount Wellington, whose summit towered something over 4,000 feet in the air, on the western shore of the estuary of the River Derwent.

"It feels kind of strange to me to be in this part of the world, so far away from the United States," remarked Fred.

"I should imagine so. You are from San Francisco, I think you said?"

"Yes."

"And may I ask what attracted you to the Antipodes?"

"A legacy."

"A legacy? Then you had a relative in Tasmania?"

"Yes. An uncle, who went to the Australian gold fields years ago, and finally drifted to this island, where he married and took to farming."

"He died and left you some of his property?"

"He left me all he had—his farm. His wife, my aunt by marriage, died some years ago, and they had no children."

"I see, you are his sole heir."

"I am."

"And you've come to take possession of your inheritance."

"I have."

"Where is the property situated?"

"I couldn't tell you. All I know is that it's somewhere in the interior of the island. Lyndock & Lyndock, a law firm in Hobart Town, who communicated with me about the matter, will give me all the necessary information when I call upon them."

"Well, I congratulate you, Sinclair. I wouldn't mind coming into a legacy myself, but there isn't much chance at present of such a thing happening. What shall you do with your property when you come into possession of it?"

"That's a conundrum. I dare say I'd like to sell it, but as I'm under legal age I suppose I couldn't do that. I don't know anything about the laws down here. It may be that I won't come into legal possession of it till I'm twenty-one."

"How old are you now?"

"A little over eighteen."

"If you remain here three years you may like the country so well that you won't care to go back. You might meet some pretty girl, marry her and settle down to farming on your late relative's property," smiled Thorpe.

"It is possible but not probable. I'm an American from the ground floor up, and I like to see the glorious stars and stripes waving over my head."

"I appreciate your feeling, my dear fellow, for to me there is no flag like the banner of old England on which the sun never sets," replied the young Englishman, enthusiastically.

"This used to be a penal colony where England sent many of her long-term convicts," said Fred.

"Yes. A settlement was formed here in 1803 with a few soldiers and convicts from Sidney. Some years afterward when the country began to build up, owing to the rapid increase in free settlers, who received grants of land in proportion to the capital they brought into the colony, convicts were sent out in increasing numbers, and many were assigned as servants to the settlers to aid them in the clearing and cultivation of their estates. The introduction of so many convicts finally got to be regarded with disfavor by the people here and in New South Wales, and their continued protest brought it to an end in the early fifties. After the discovery of gold in Australia the men whose time had expired flocked to the diggings in the other colonies, attracted by the prospects of making rich hauls, and glad to escape from police surveillance in a country where their records were too well known. Those who remained became well-conducted members of the community, and you are pretty certain to meet with many of their descendants."

"You are here on business, I think?" said Fred.

"Yes. I represent a Melbourne importing house."

"Do you expect to stay any length of time?"

"I intend to visit all the important towns on

the island before I go back. I can't say how long that will take me."

"You will remain a while in Hobart Town, won't you?"

"Not over a week, I believe."

"I wish you were going to stay longer. I should like to go around with you and get acquainted with the place."

"We will take in the town together while I remain here. We ought to have a good time, for we seem to be congenial company. I never did fancy Americans much, but I'm bound to say I like you, old chap. After I leave it is probable you will be taken to your property so that you may get an idea of what it amounts to."

"I suppose so," replied Fred.

He and Thorpe now gave most of their attention to the city they were rapidly approaching. It was as new to the young Englishman as it was to Sinclair. Fred observed a great difference between it and Melbourne, which is one of the chief ports of Australia. It was not nearly so big in the first place; nor did it have anything like the number of vessels at the wharves or in the stream. At length the steamer reached her dock, and the passengers stepped ashore with light articles of baggage. Some waited for their trunks to be landed, but Thorpe suggested to Fred that they go and put up at a hotel first, and come back for their baggage later on. The young American had no objection. He only had a small trunk anyway and could get along for a while without calling on its contents. As he stepped on the dock he felt like a person set down in a new world. Like at Melbourne the British flag flew everywhere, and that of itself was a novelty to him, for he had not remained long enough in Melbourne to get used to it.

There was a great deal of activity along the docks, but this Fred and his new friend soon left behind them. Fred let Thorpe take the lead, since he was older and accustomed to the manners and customs of that part of the world. Thorpe made inquiries for the hotel to which he had been recommended. It was a moderate-priced house, frequented largely by commercial men. It was not a great distance from the water front and they soon reached it. They registered and were assigned to adjoining rooms. After sprucing up a bit they took a short stroll about the streets and returned in time for dinner, the bill-of-fare of which proved quite satisfactory to them. On leaving the dining-room they walked back to the steamer and arranged to have their trunks sent to the hotel. That off their minds they devoted the rest of the day to seeing the town, returning to the hotel in ample time for supper. Fred had intended to call on the law firm who had charge of his late uncle's property, but put that business off until the next day, as his companion would then be engaged with his own affairs and he could not expect to have his society during the major part of the day.

"Well," said Thorpe, when they strolled into the reading-room after supper, "what shall we do with ourselves this evening?"

"Whatever you propose goes with me," replied Fred.

"All right, then we'll see what Hobart Town

looks like by gaslight," said the young Englishman.

In the course of half an hour they sallied forth, and for a couple of hours promenaded the principal thoroughfares. At last they found themselves in front of a big drinking saloon, through the open doorways of which strains of music issued. The place was crowded with men, the majority of whom were rough-and-ready chaps who hailed from the lower strata of society. They were lined up as thick as hops at the bar, which occupied a portion of one side of the big room, and were scattered about at a score or more tables that took up the greater part of the floor. At half of the tables card games were in progress, and to these tables waiters were constantly bringing drinks. There was a long side room, divided off by pillars, where a bunch of young fellows were playing pool and billiards at several tables. The air inside was hazy with tobacco smoke, and vibrated with the loud talk and laughter of the customers of the place. As Fred and his companion stood looking in their attention was arrested by a sweet girlish voice beginning the old-time ballad "Robin Adair." Her vocalization was as clear as a bell and singularly seductive. There was a depth of feeling in her tones that thrilled Fred's heart. The singer was hidden by a turn in the room, which also concealed the musicians who accompanied her.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Thorpe, who seemed much impressed himself, as the last words of the first verse died away. "She's a corking fine singer. Let's go in and see what she looks like?"

Fred, who would have hesitated entering a drinking resort under any other circumstances, felt strangely eager to catch a sight of the singer. They walked in as she began the second verse, and made their way toward that part of the room where the singer was. On a low stage at the back of the ell stood a lovely but plainly attired girl of perhaps seventeen years. At one side sat three musicians. The entire space in front facing the stage was filled with tables. Not all were occupied and Fred and his companion took possession of a vacant one not far from the singer. Hardly were they seated when a waiter came up.

"What will you please to 'ave, gents?" he asked. "A brandy and soda, or a mug of hold English hale?"

"We'll take the ale, waiter," said Thorpe.

"Hold on," said Fred. "I don't drink ale, but you can bring me soda without the brandy."

"One hale and one soda plain," repeated the waiter, and then he walked off in the direction of the bar.

Fred hardly took his eyes off the face of the fair singer as he gave his order. Her countenance and her voice alike charmed him to the core of his heart. Fred had encountered many pretty girls in his life, but none that in any way compared with this one. It wasn't merely her beauty that attracted and impressed him. It was the wistful tender expression that haunted her ravishing eyes, which seemed to unconsciously reveal a story hedged around with unhappiness. This was made plainer by the touching pathos of her voice. Fred's sympathetic young heart went to her. As he listened to the thrilling tones of

the singer he felt that he would cheerfully go through fire and water to serve her. She was finishing the last verse with the words "Come to me Robin, my Robin Adair," when the magnetism of Fred's gaze drew her eyes in his direction.

Their eyes met as the last note floated from the singer's lips. The girl's face flushed and one of her hands went to her heart. That she was strangely agitated was apparent. Then by an effort she withdrew her gaze, bowed to the rough assemblage and retired behind the wing of the stage.

"That girl is too good for this sort of place," said Thorpe, finishing his ale.

Fred made no reply. He was staring fixedly at the wing, eager for the reappearance of the singer in answer to the noisy applause of the audience. She didn't come again, greatly to his regret, though the musicians seemed to expect that she would, for they looked expectantly at the stage.

Shortly after, a male singer, with a healthy melodious voice, appeared on the stage and began to sing a selection of comic songs that caught popular approval from the start.

He was all to the good in his line, and Fred, under other circumstances, would have enjoyed his performance hugely. But he couldn't now.

The man's voice jarred on his nerves. His thoughts were concentrated on the fair girl who had made such a profound impression on him. He was restless and dissatisfied with his surroundings, and would have given all he owned if by so doing he could have obtained an introduction to the lovely singer of the evennig. Such a piece of good luck, however, seemed utterly out of the question.

"Well, my dear fellow, I guess we'd better go," said Thorpe when the comic vocalist had finally retired after several recalls.

He got up and Fred followed reluctantly. At that moment a side door opened and a girlish figure attired for the street appeared and started to make her way out of the place. As she was passing a certain table where four hard-looking fellows sat playing cards and making themselves unpleasantly conspicuous by their talk and manners, one of the men seized her by the wrist and boisterously declared that she could not pass without paying toll in the shape of a kiss. The girl shrank back in a frightened way, and half the people in the room turned their attention in the direction of the spot. Fred and Thorpe were close by. The former recognized the girl as the singer who had so entranced him. In a moment his face flushed with anger and indignation at the insult offered to her. The ruffian who had hold of her jumped up and pushed his arm around her waist to draw her to him. She uttered a cry of distress.

"Please let me go," she pleaded.

"Not until I have had a kiss from those ruby lips," he grinned.

"No, no; please release me."

Her appeal had no effect whatever on him. He drew her resisting figure to him and was about to force her head back when something happened that startled the establishment. Fred, with flashing eyes and heaving chest, sprang forward and struck him a tremendous blow in the jaw with his

fist, causing him to release the girl and stagger against the table with such force that he overturned it with a crash and went down in the wreck of broken glasses and scattered cards.

CHAPTER II.—Fred Visits Lyndock & Lyndock.

The three ruffiantly companions of the man jumped on their feet with a string of imprecations and each one put his hand to his hip pocket where he carried a revolver. The house was instantly in an uproar, and everybody looked for trouble. After delivering the blow Fred stood ready to repeat it if necessary, and his courageous and aggressive attitude made a hundred friends for him on the spot. Several broad-shouldered men jumped up from nearby tables and drew their guns with evident intention of seeing fair play.

The rascal who had been felled scrambled on his feet with a fierce imprecation and flashed out his revolver. Fred would assuredly have been shot then and there had not the girl, with a scream, thrown herself in front of him as the fellow raised his weapon at full cock.

"You shall not shoot him!" she cried, in thrilling tones that caused him to pause, for he saw he could not reach Fred without hitting her.

The brief respite saved the boy's life. A dozen men, who admired the young American's nerve, stepped forward and interfered in his behalf.

"Put up your gun," roared a brawny man, who looked like a miner from some nearby diggings. "That boy served you right, and we're goin' to stand by him."

His tone showed that he meant business, and the drawn revolvers of himself and his friends overawed the rascal and his three associates. The fellow uncocked his weapon and sullenly returned it to his pocket.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Fred, "but I'm not afraid of this fellow. If he wasn't a coward he wouldn't have pulled his gun on an unarmed boy."

"You're all right, young chap," said the big man, approvingly. "You're built of the real stuff. Shake and drink with us."

"I'll shake," replied Fred, accepting his hand, "but you'll have to excuse me from drinking."

"Why so?"

"Because I don't drink."

"Well, I'll allow you are rather young to crook your elbow. We'll excuse you, and drink your health ourselves. What's your name and where do you hail from?"

"My name is Fred Sinclair, and I hail from California."

"An American, eh?"

"Yes, sir; every inch, and I'm proud of it."

"By ginger! You ought to be English, for you'd do honor to the flag."

"Thank you for the compliment. I assure you that I appreciate it."

"Well, you'd better make yourself scarce now while the chance is yours, my friend," said the big fellow, in a low tone. "Those chaps are a hard set, and the chap you knocked down has it in for you. I wouldn't like to hear that they reached you for this trouble. They may make an

attempt to follow you, for I see they are consulting together and looking at you; but don't worry. Me and my pards will see that you and your friend get a fair start before we allow them to leave. Take the girl with you and start her on her way. It was a manly act on your part to defend her, but you took your life in your hands in doing it."

"Well, she saved me, and you and your friends cinched the matter, for which act on your part I'm very grateful. Will you tell me your name?"

"Joe Hallyard."

"Thank you, Mr. Hallyard. I hope I may have the pleasure of meeting you again."

"That's as it may be, but I think it's unlikely, for me and my mates start back for the diggin's in the morning."

"What diggings?"

"The gold diggin's, on the west coast. They ain't nothin' like the Australian fields used to be, but they offer a fair return for a man's labor. Now be on your way, for I see them chaps are startin' to get out ahead of you."

During the foregoing conversation the girl never made a move to take advantage of the chance she had to leave the room.

After Joe Hallyard and his mates interfered between Fred and the ruffians she stepped back and stood near Harley Thorpe, who had been as much astonished at his companion's bold act as any person in the house.

"Come along, Thorpe," said Fred to his friend. Then turning to the girl he added: "Permit me to see you outside, miss."

The girl timidly approached and accepted his escort. As the three passed through the crowd toward the door, Fred was the object of much attention, and more than a score of men insisted on shaking hands with him and complimenting him on his courage.

The four ruffians started to follow in a careless way, but were headed off by Joe Hallyard and his friends. Not a word was exchanged between Fred, his friend or the girl till they reached the street, and then the latter held out her hand to the young American.

"I am very grateful to you for saving me from that man's insulting conduct," she said.

"You are welcome, miss," replied Fred, politely.

"It was very kind of you to interfere in behalf of one who is a stranger to you. You are certainly very brave to strike a big, reckless-looking man. He might have killed you, and then I should never have forgiven myself for being the cause of your death."

"He might have shot me but for you jumping in front of me. You were brave, too, to run the chance of stopping a bullet. We will consider that your action squares your obligation, and I need only say that I am very glad I was able to be of service to you," replied Fred.

"I shall always remember you with gratitude," she said, with a look that made Fred's heart beat quicker than usual.

"I think I shall always remember you, too, miss. Do you object to telling me your name? Mine is Fred Sinclair, and I'm an American."

"My name is Ruby Ransom," she replied modestly.

"I am very glad to have met you, Miss Ransom."

This is my friend, Harley Thorpe; but we mustn't stop here, for those rascals are liable to come out and go gunning for me. If you do not object, my friend and myself will accompany you home so that you will get there all right."

"Thank you; but it isn't necessary, as I live only a short distance from here," she said, in a slightly embarrassed way, which Fred accepted as a hint that she preferred to go home alone.

"Very well. If you don't think our escort necessary we won't press it on you. May I ask one question—do you sing every night?"

"This is the first night I have sung here," she replied with a deep flush. "I wouldn't do it, for I don't think it is just a proper place for a young girl, but—there are reasons—which I cannot explain," she answered hesitatingly.

"Oh, all right. Only I should like to hear you sing again. You have a fine voice, and—and it rather impressed me, as did your face. If I thought you'd sing to-morrow night I'd come again for the pleasure of hearing you."

"It is probable I will sing here to-morrow night, and for some nights to come. If you should come I will see you in the room. Now good-night, and believe me I will not forget what you did for me."

She offered him her hand, made a slight bow to Thorpe and was gone.

"By Jove, old man! You took my breath away to-night," said Thorpe as they started for their hotel. "I wouldn't have done what you did in that free-and-easy for a mint. Those chaps are bad men, and the fellow you hit is the worst of the lot. They look like fellows who pick off a living in the bush, as we call it in Melbourne. I wouldn't be surprised if they were members of the Redlaw gang, reports of whose depredations I've read about in the Melbourne and other Australian newspapers."

"What are they—crooks?" asked Fred.

"They are road agents or highwaymen, who infest the roads of this island, and rob every one they come across. The authorities have a big posse of mounted constabulary looking for them right along. They don't seem to mind the police a bit, for they have fought with them on several occasions and always worsted them."

"They must be tough rascals."

"They are. I hope I won't have the misfortune of meeting with any of them when I start on my tour of the island. At any rate I shall take care not to carry any more ready money than I absolutely need to pay my expenses."

"I should think the Government would take a hand in the matter if the police are unable to break up the gang," said Fred.

"No doubt but it'll come to that."

In a few minutes they reached the hotel and went to their rooms. After breakfast next morning Thorpe said that he would be busy most of the day and that Fred would have to look out for himself.

"Better call on your lawyer about eleven, and after you get through with them you can take a car and go to the Botanical Gardens, or any other place that strikes your fancy. I'll meet you here in the reading-room about five and we'll go to dinner together. Then we'll decide how we

will spend the evening," said the young Englishman.

At eleven o'clock Fred entered the office of Lyndock & Lyndock and asked for one of the members of the firm. His name was taken in to Alan Lyndock, the junior partner, and he was presently admitted to that gentleman's private room.

"Sit down, young man. Glad to make your acquaintance," said the lawyer, shaking hands with his young visitor. "You have come a long distance to claim your legacy, but it's worth the trouble, or I shouldn't have sent you your ticket and money for your expenses. You have, of course, brought all the necessary documents to prove your identity?"

"Yes, sir. Here they are," and Fred laid a packet on the lawyer's desk.

"Very good. You are an orphan, I believe?"

"I am."

"As far as we have been able to find out you appear to be the only living relative of the testator, John Sinclair, so that even had he failed to make a will you would be legally entitled to all that he possessed. The will, however, simplifies matters. He specifically left his property to you, and you, therefore, are the heir-at-law, and in due course will obtain possession of your inheritance."

"It consists of a farm, doesn't it?"

"Yes, and about £200 in bank."

"How far from this city is it?"

"Quite some distance. On the west side of the island, not a great way from the gold fields. In fact as gold has been found all around it it may be said to be in the gold fields."

"I suppose somebody is living on it and looking after the place?"

"Your late uncle's housekeeper and her husband are in charge. A part of the farm is under cultivation."

The nearness of the property to the gold fields made Fred desirous of taking a trip out to it, and he suggested it to the lawyer.

"Mr. Manners, our head clerk, is about to visit the place to see how things are getting on," replied Mr. Lyndock. "You may accompany him."

"Thank you, sir. When does he start?"

"Some day next week. We will let you know in time. By the way where are you stopping?"

Fred named the hotel and the lawyer made a note of it. After some further talk Mr. Lyndock invited Fred to lunch with him at his club. The boy accepted and soon afterward they left the office together.

CHAPTER III.—A Night Attack.

After supper that evening Thorpe proposed a visit to the theatre. Fred hesitated as he wanted to revisit the free-and-easy and see Ruby Ransom again. The girl occupied a large share of his thoughts, and he was very anxious to know her better. He felt diffident about suggesting what was uppermost in his mind for fear the Englishman would quiz him about the girl. He was sensitive on the subject, as he liked Ruby better than he cared to admit. The thought flashing across

his mind that the girl would probably sing for some nights to come at the establishment where she was engaged he reluctantly said that he was ready to go to the theatre if Thorpe wanted to. So to the theatre they went and saw a well-known English melodrama called "The Ticket-of-Leave Man." The play greatly impressed Fred because the leading female character appeared in the first act as a poor girl trying to make her living singing in public gardens and such places, and that reminded him of Ruby Ransom.

The girl gets into trouble for changing a counterfeit gold coin, unknowingly presented to her by the hero, Bob Brierly, a Lancashire lad on a visit to London. In his effort to protect her he knocks down the officer and is arrested, tried for the crime himself, convicted and sent to prison, from which he is subsequently released on a ticket-of-leave—the rebate allowed for good behavior. The rest of the play dealt with his love for the girl, and her love for him, and the trouble he gets into owing to his prison record. Fred left the theater more than ever determined to follow up his acquaintance with Ruby Ransom. He was certain that circumstances of a strenuous nature compelled her to sing at the free-and-easy establishment or he was sure she would not do it. He was eager to find out what those circumstances were and relieve her of them if it were possible for him to do it. Thorpe noticed his abstraction as they were walking back to the hotel and asked him what he was thinking about.

"Nothing in particular," he replied, evasively.

"Oh, come, my dear fellow, that won't do. Is it the play that has had such an effect on you? I'll bet May Edwards, the heroine, reminds you of the girl you saved from that ruffian in the free-and-easy last night."

"Nonsense!" replied Fred, flushing up.

Thorpe laughed.

"Dear boy, you can't fool me," he said. "You're soft on that girl. I can see it with half an eye."

"You're away off," replied Fred, in a nettled tone.

"I suppose that's American slang meaning that I'm not on the right track, eh?" laughed Thorpe. "I'd be willing to bet a five-pound note that that girl has turned your head. There is no reason for you to feel ashamed about it if she has, for she is a beautiful lass, while her voice is wonderful as far as it goes. With a little training she'd catch on at the music halls."

"I'd hate to see her singing in—but what am I talking about? She's nothing to me. I may never see her again."

"Oh, yes you will. We'll go to the free-and-easy to-morrow night and have another look at her. When she leaves you'll have the chance to speak to her again. I'll wager that will suit you first rate."

They turned into a side street which was rather dark in comparison with the brilliantly lighted thoroughfare they had left behind them. Two rough-looking men, who had been following them on the other side of the way from the moment they left the theatre, crossed over and followed after them. When they reached the middle of the block they heard the stealthy footsteps of the men in their rear and Fred turned and looked back. The fellows were just passing a gas lamp

and the young American thought he recognized them as two of the ruffians of the night before.

"Thorpe," he said, "we're being followed."

"The deuce you say," and the Englishman glanced over his shoulder.

"They're after me, I'll bet."

"After you! What makes you think so?"

"Because they look like two of the companions of that rascal I knocked down last night."

"I hope you're mistaken. It would be rather awkward to have a tussle with fellows of their stamp who are armed, most likely, while we are not."

"I don't believe I'm mistaken. They're coming on fast, and mean to catch us before we can reach the corner."

"It isn't very dignified to run, but probably it's what we ought to do."

"I shan't run. Let's back up against one of these buildings and see what their intentions are."

"I'd rather not inquire into their intentions," replied Thorpe. "If they're the chaps from the free-and-easy an encounter with them is not desirable."

"Desirable or not they mean to get me if they can."

"If that is your impression we'd better take to our heels without further argument. I'm bound to say that I don't fancy their looks myself."

The two men behind were rapidly overhauling them, and if their intentions were unfriendly the crisis was bound to come in a few moments unless Fred was willing to adopt his friend's suggestion. The young American, however, was too plucky to run. If there was danger to be encountered he was ready to meet it, even if the odds were against him. Thorpe was more prudent, and was anxious to avoid trouble; but he had no thought of deserting his companion if the boy was determined to stand his ground. So they kept on at a rapid walk, conscious that they were being steadily overtaken.

"We'll stop at that door yonder and let them either pass or attack us," said Fred.

Accordingly when they came opposite the door in question they backed up against it. As Fred laid one of his hands against the woodwork he felt a thin bar of iron standing there. His fingers closed around it at once. He now felt prepared for the men if they intended to attack him and Thorpe, for accident had placed a formidable weapon in his hands. The two men soon showed that their attitude was hostile. As soon as they got opposite the door they suddenly turned and rushed up to Fred and his companion.

"So we've got you at last, you young imp," the foremost said.

"You only think you have," replied Fred coolly.

He swung the iron bar up with a sudden quick movement, and it struck the rascal a numbing blow on his forearm. The revolver he had partially concealed went flying from his grasp. The fellow uttered an exclamation of pain, followed by a fierce imprecation. Fred didn't wait for him to recover but shoved the bar against his side with a thrust so effective that he staggered back against his companion. On the principle that an advantage should always be followed up, Fred sprang forward and knocked the second

man senseless with his weapon. The other, seeing the fate that had overtaken his comrade, and having no wish to get another crack from the bar, took to his heels and disappeared down the street.

Thorpe was amazed at what happened. He could not understand how his young friend had come into possession of the iron bar which had worked such havoc on the enemy. Certainly he did not have it before they took shelter in the door.

"By jove!" he ejaculated. "Where did you find that bar, Sinclair?"

"Right here in the doorway," replied Fred. "Mighty lucky find, for it has saved my bacon at any rate. Too bad one of them got away. However, we'll turn this fellow over to the police, and I'll see that he gets all that's coming to him."

"We certainly are in luck—you especially. That chap who got away came for you with a revolver and blood in his eye. My heart jumped into my mouth for I thought he intended to shoot you."

"I guess that was his intention. I'll take charge of his weapon which lies on the sidewalk."

Fred walked over to the spot where it lay and picked it up. He saw that it was cocked ready for business. Uncocking it he placed it in his pocket.

"Get hold of this fellow by the arm. I'll take the other, and we'll drag him to the corner."

The ruffian was quite a weight for them, as he was a good-sized man, but they got him to the corner without a great deal of trouble, and then looked around for a policeman. An empty cab was bowling along and Thorpe hailed the driver.

"Take us to the police station," he said.

They shoved the unconscious rascal into the vehicle, followed themselves, and the cab rolled off. Inside of ten minutes it drew up at the station. Fred went in and told his story to the officer in charge. Two policemen were sent outside to take charge of the ruffian. He was recognized as a "bad man," and promptly locked up. Fred and Thorpe said they would appear at court in the morning to testify against him, and then they resumed their walk to the hotel, where they arrived without further incident.

CHAPTER IV.—Fred Answers a Call for Help.

Next morning Fred and the young Englishman made their appearance at the court and when the ruffian was brought to the bar they told their story. The fellow made a general denial of the charge, but refused to give any account of himself, so the magistrate made no bones about holding him for trial. After dinner Fred started out to see some more of the town on his own hook. Without any premeditation on his part his steps led him in the direction of the free-and-easy. He wasn't aware that he was close to it till he saw the sign above the door. He stopped and looked in. The interior was gloomy and almost deserted.

The bar only appeared to be in commission, and one bar man was sufficient to minister to the thirst of the few customers lined up before it. Evidently this place was purely a night resort,

and so Fred passed on, wondering if, after what had happened, it would be safe for him to revisit the place that evening with Thorpe, as the latter had proposed. Fred continued to walk at random, and ten minutes later found that he had wandered into a poor section of the town. Suddenly he heard shrieks issuing from one of the poor looking tenements.

As he came abreast of the house a girlish form appeared at a third-story window and cried "Help! help!" in a tone and manner that showed something strenuous was transpiring in the place. Fred naturally looked up at her, and was a bit startled to recognize her as Ruby Ransom. Such an appeal from anybody would have aroused Fred to action, but coming from Ruby it carried ten times as much weight. He lost not an instant in opening the street door and rushing in, his impression being that the building had caught fire. Darting upstairs as fast as he could go he soon reached the second landing, but saw not the slightest sign of fire. But he heard sounds that convinced him that something akin to murder was going on inside the rooms. He banged open the nearest door and rushed inside. It was the living-room of the apartments. There was no one there, but the furniture was in a state of disorder as if there had been some kind of a scrap there. From an inner room came piteous appeals in a woman's weak voice.

"Don't, William; don't strike me again. You will kill me. Oh, please don't!"

That was enough for Fred. He was young and inexperienced in domestic life, and did not understand what chances he was taking in butting into family troubles. It happened, however, that in this case common humanity justified his actions. He dashed into the room where the sounds came from, and found a burly drunken fellow in the act of slugging a poor frail woman who lay helpless in bed. He sprang forward and grasped the man's wrist as he was in the act of delivering the blow.

"You coward!" cried Fred, impetuously. "How dare you strike a helpless woman?"

With an imprecation the fellow wrenched his arm free, turned about in a staggering way and confronted the boy with bloodshot eyes and a furious expression of countenance.

"Who are you?" he roared.

"No matter who I am. I won't stand for this sort of thing," replied Fred, resolutely.

At that moment Ruby came running back into the room, her face the picture of acute distress. She recognized Fred at once, and her surprise at seeing him there was intense. His appearance at that critical moment was greeted by her with great relief. Any outsider would have been welcome, but he, who had defended her at the risk of his life in the free-and-easy, and who had hardly been out of her thoughts since, was more welcome than any one else, for she felt he was a tower of strength in an emergency like the present one. Still she feared for his safety, for her drunken stepfather was a man not to be crossed with impunity. She paused at the door, with beating heart and anxious face, and watched the outcome of the tilt between her mother's husband and the young American.

"You won't stand it, eh?" sneered the man,

whose name was Martin Pocock. "What have you got to say about it, anyway?"

"I've got this much to say—that no one with a spark of manhood would think of striking a woman under any circumstances, and no one but a cowardly brute would attack a sick and helpless woman in bed like you were doing."

"Oh, I'm a cowardly brute, am I?" snarled the fellow. "I'll make you swallow them words, and every tooth in your head with 'em, before I'm done with you."

He tore off his jacket to show that he meant business, and began rolling up his shirt sleeves preparatory to sailing in and wiping the floor with the boy. Fred, seeing what was coming, did not wait for Pocock to begin hostilities. Whatever advantage was to be got by taking the bull by the horns he was going to get it. As Pocock lurched from side to side in his efforts to maintain his footing, Fred jumped for him, seized him by the back of the neck, and shoved him toward the door leading into the living-room.

Pocock staggered and fell full on his face. Swearing like a trooper he floundered around in his efforts to recover his feet. Fred waited for him to get up, when he gave him another push that sent him through the door into the arms of a policeman who had come up in answer to Ruby's cries for help. Pocock grabbed the officer, recognizing him as an new enemy, and forgot all about the boy who had just handled him so roughly. He was fighting mad and was drunk enough to be dangerous.

A fierce scrap took place between the two men. The policeman, however, was accustomed to dealing with men of Pocock's stamp, and before many moments he had the man down on the floor and handcuffs on him. Leaving him there he proceeded to investigate the reason for Ruby's outcries. Fred told him how the girl's appeal for help had brought him up there, and what he had seen on entering the room. Then he told the officer how he had handled the man.

"I intended to throw him out of the place," said the boy, "and I wouldn't have hesitated pitching him downstairs. I have no consideration whatever for such a brute."

"You're a plucky young chap," said the policeman, looking Fred over. "You must be pretty strong to think of overcoming such a husky chap as that fellow."

"There are other things that count as well as strength," replied Fred. "I don't assume to be near as strong as that man. Had he got a good grip on me it would have been bad for me. That's why I sailed in before he was ready, and took every advantage I could."

The policeman now turned to Ruby, who had come forward, and asked her what the trouble was about. She explained that her stepfather, who had been away somewhere for weeks, had turned up unexpectedly that afternoon in an intoxicated and quarrelsome condition. He had begun trouble by knocking her around the living-room because she tried to keep him away from her mother, who was ill in bed.

Gaining entrance into the chamber he had spent some time abusing his wife. Finally he said he was broke and demanded money in order to continue his spree. His wife had none to give him.

whereupon he declared he would pull her out of bed and throw her downstairs. Believing he meant to carry out his threat Ruby, conscious that she could not prevent him, ran to the front window and called for help.

"I'll take him to the station and you can make the charge of assault against him," said the policeman.

"No, no, Ruby," pleaded the sick woman.

"But mother, something must be done or he may kill you," said the girl, earnestly. "I'll make the charge, officer," said Fred. "I saw enough to warrant me doing it. It won't do to let him go. He's sure to make all kinds of trouble."

"I shall take him in anyway. He's drunk, and he assaulted me. He'll be locked up and brought before the magistrate in the morning. If you and this girl will appear at court and tell your stories he'll get a year at least, probably more."

"I'll appear against him. Tell me where the court is so I can find it. I am a stranger in this town," said Fred.

The policeman told him, and he made a note of it in his pocketbook. The officer then got hold of his prisoner and marched him off.

CHAPTER V.—A Hold-up.

Quite a number of the neighbors, mostly women, who had been attracted by the cries of Ruby, followed the policeman into the Pocock apartments, and after the departure of the officer with his prisoner, they remained to comfort and condole with the sick woman. Fred would have taken his leave, too, now that his services were no longer required, but for the fact that this was Ruby's home, and he saw the chance to have a talk with the girl.

"How can I thank you, Mr. Sinclair," said Ruby, taking him by the hand, "for answering my call in time to save my dear mother from ill-treatment at the hands of that man whom I blush to acknowledge as my stepfather?"

"I don't want any thanks, Miss Ransom," replied Fred. "It affords me a great deal of satisfaction to render you and your mother a service. When I heard your cry I recognized your face at the window. I didn't lose a minute in coming up to see what was the matter."

"It was so good of you to do so," Ruby said, with a shy glance in his face.

"Not at all. It was clearly my duty."

"It was brave of you to prevent Mr. Pocock from striking my mother. He is dangerous when intoxicated. Yet I might expect you would not hesitate to face him after what you did for me the night before last. You are certainly a plucky boy."

"I am glad you have a good opinion of me," smiled Fred.

"I couldn't have anything else."

"Thank you, Miss Ransom. Now is there any way that I can be of service to you? Any favor that I can do for you?"

"No, no; there is nothing you can do. I thank you for making the offer."

"Isn't it true that you are singing at the free-and-easy in order to support your mother and yourself?" said Fred.

Ruby looked embarrassed.

"You need not be afraid to admit it to me," said Fred, gently. "I have taken a great liking for you, and I would like to be your friend, and help you, if you would let me. Have you any objection to my friendship?"

"No, no; I should be glad if——"

She stopped and blushed.

"If— if I could call you a friend; but mother and I are so poor that we cannot expect to make any friends."

"The fact that you are poor will make no difference with me. It is when a person is in need that one appreciates a real friend. Well, I offer to be a real friend, both to you and your mother, and in return I ask you to be my friend, too. I am a stranger here. The night I heard you sing 'Robin Adair' was my first night in Hobart Town. I arrived by steamer that morning from Melbourne, so you see I have only been three days on this island. I am acquainted with nobody besides yourself, except the young man you saw me with, and the lawyer who has charge of the business which brought me here all the way from California in the United States. I don't like the idea of you singing at that free-and-easy, but I suppose it is necessary until you can find something else by which you can earn a living. I imagine that the proprietor of the place doesn't pay you much—not as much as your singing is worth."

"No, he does not; but what little he gives me is urgently needed by us."

"Perhaps you would let me loan you a little something—say a pound or two—to help you along. It would give me great pleasure to do so."

"You are very kind to make the offer, but I couldn't accept it. It wouldn't be right. Besides, it might be a long time before I could repay it."

"It wouldn't make any difference to me how long you owed it. I can easily afford to let you have it, for I expect to come into a legacy that was left me by my uncle, who died on this island some months ago. It was to receive that legacy that brought me to the island. With a sick mother on your hands it would be well for you to have a little fund to fall back on; and two pounds is not a great deal to have in an emergency fund. However, it's better than nothing. You'll accept it, won't you, if only to oblige me?"

Fred spoke in such an earnest and friendly way that, with the knowledge of what two pounds (the equivalent of \$10) meant to her and her mother, she reluctantly accepted the loan, promising to repay it as soon as she was able to do so. After that they got on more confidential terms and Fred learned something of the girl's history. Her father died when she was a little girl, and a couple of years later her mother married Martin Pocock, at that time an industrious mechanic. For several years things went very well with her and her mother, and then a run of hard luck overtook Pocock. He took to drink after a while, and went from bad to worse, his family naturally sharing in his downward course. Drink developed all that was bad in his nature, and he got into the habit of abusing his wife—sometimes even beating her when he was particularly ugly.

Six months since he disappeared, and that was the last Ruby or her mother saw of him until he

turned up that afternoon half intoxicated and in a bad humor. What he might have done, in his irrational state, if Fred had not appeared so promptly on the scene, Ruby shuddered to think.

"You probably saved by mother's life," she said, tearfully; "for had he dragged her from her bed, and otherwise ill-treated her, it would, in her weak condition, have likely resulted in her death, and then I wouldn't have cared what became of me, for my mother is the only friend I have in the world."

"Not the only one, Ruby," Fred said, calling her by her first name; "remember I am your friend, too, and you will find me a true one. You believe me, don't you?"

"Yes," she replied, shyly, "I am sure you mean what you say."

Before Fred left Ruby introduced him to her mother. She had told her mother about the trouble she got into on her first night at the free-and-easy, and how a young American boy saved her from insult at the risk of his life. When Mrs. Pocock found that the lad who had saved her from ill-treatment at the hands of her husband was the same one who had assisted her daughter she could not find words to fittingly express her gratitude to him. Fred spoke in a kind and sympathetic way to her, assuring her that in him she and her daughter would find a true friend and, if need be, a protector. He left, promising to call soon again, and, unknowingly, he carried away Ruby's heart.

When Thorpe proposed that evening to visit the free-and-easy again, Fred was quite ready to go, but on this occasion each took a revolver as a protection in case any further attempt should be made to waylay them on the street. They secured a table near the stage, and after several singers had obliged, as they called it, Ruby came out and sang "Robin Adair," receiving two recalls. She saw Fred and Thorpe and smiled at them. They waited till she was done for the evening and then saw her home. On the following Monday, Fred received word from Lawyer Lyndock that his chief clerk, Mr. Manners, would be ready to start for the Sinclair farm, by the stage which went to Blackpool, via the gold fields, Wednesday. The boy was told that Mr. Manners would call for him. The young American passed the news to Thorpe that afternoon when they met.

"I'll be with you, my dear fellow. I have arranged today to go to the town of Blackpool, which is north of the diggings, by stage on Thursday, and then take the railroad from there to Grimsby, but I can just as well make the trip a day earlier in order to have the pleasure of your company," said Thorpe.

"That's fine," replied Fred, delighted to have his friend with him on the trip.

They spent the evening at a music hall, and next day Fred called on Ruby and her mother to acquaint them with the fact of his temporary absence from town for a short time.

"After seeing all I want of the farm which is coming to me, I may take a look in at the gold diggings, but it is probable I'll be back in a couple of weeks," he said to Ruby, who felt a bit blue at the thought of his going away from Hobart Town even for a short time.

As Martin Pocock had been sent to prison for a

year, Fred knew that his wife and stepdaughter would be safe from any trouble that he could make. The rascal captured by Fred and Thorpe would not be put on a trial for a month. He had been identified by several of the mounted constabulary who were in town as a member of the Redlaw gang, and the authorities intended to make an example of him.

It was hoped, however, before his trial came on that more of the rascals would be taken. On Wednesday morning about ten the stage left Hobart Town en route for the gold fields and Blackpool. Mr. Manners had an inside seat while Fred and Thorpe rode on the roof, where they could get a better view of the country. There were about a dozen passengers altogether, and the stage also carried a mail bag and an express box, both stowed away under the driver's seat. They stopped at an inn on the outskirts of a large-sized village for dinner.

After leaving the village a mile or two the road branched away from all signs of civilization, and for miles they scarcely saw a house. The scenery was wild and strange to Fred, who viewed it with interest. The trees were straight and of large size, very like those in the interior of Australia.

Brilliant flowers, and luxuriant grass and shrubs, all of a species totally unlike anything he had ever seen in California, abounded. Locusts chattered on the trees, mosquitoes flitted through the air, and birds of gorgeous plumage screamed and twitted on every bough of the woodland stretching away on either side of the road along which the stage bowled.

"Here's a splendid view," said Fred to Thorpe, as the coach swung around a sharp turn in the road where a wide opening in the trees disclosed on one side a broad vista of undulating landscape, through which ran a river that shimmered in the afternoon sunshine.

"Spendid," replied Thorpe. "It reminds me of a place I once visited in England near—hello! What's the matter?"

The exclamation was drawn from him by the abrupt reining in of the horses by the driver, from whom escaped an ejaculation of consternation. Four horsemen had suddenly appeared in the road in front of the stage. They were masked and held rifles in their hands with which they covered the driver and the passengers on the roof. Two other men, also masked and mounted, came out of the tall, thick underbrush, rode up to either side of the coach, and, presenting to the dismayed travelers the muzzles of a couple of revolvers, cried out:

"Gentlemen, I'll trouble you to get out and line up on the side of the road."

"My gracious!" ejaculated Fred. "What does this mean?"

"It's a hold-up," replied Thorpe. "We've run up against the Redlaw gang."

CHAPTER VI.—A Startling Recognition.

"Tumble down you chaps up there," said another horseman, riding up and pointing his gun at Fred and the others on the roof of the coach.

"Tumble down, and be quick about it," he added sharply.

"We'll have to obey," said Thorpe. "Get down, Sinclair. Neither of us has much to lose, that's some satisfaction."

Outside and inside passengers were soon lined up at the side of the road. Fred had no funds to speak of, for Mr. Manners was paying all his expenses, so the hold-up did not worry him greatly. He felt sorry for those who happened to be well supplied with money, as two or three were. While two of the road agents, starting from each end of the line, began taking from the passengers all their valuables, two others were busy rifling the coach of the mail pouch and express box. The remaining two, one of whom appeared to be the leader of the bunch, sat on their horses with their guns ready for instant action, watching the work of their associates.

As soon as the mail bag and express case were on the ground, the men tackled the latter with a heavy hammer and cold chisel which one of them got from his saddle bag. They soon smashed the lock and opened the box. It was full of small packages, many of them containing money. Every package was examined and most of them were appropriated by the rascals. The mail bag was next slit up and the contents dumped out. The two rascals separated the bunches of letters and registered mail from the bundles of newspapers and miscellaneous packages and crammed them into their saddle bags.

By the time they finished their job the passengers had been cleaned out. Purses, money bags, watches and chains, and every kind of valuable property they had about them, they were compelled either to give up or have wrested from them. So rapidly did the rascals work that the whole process of "sticking up" the coach lasted altogether not more than twenty minutes. Their felonious work being completed, the road agents leaped into their saddles again, and the despoiled coach and passengers were allowed to proceed on their journey again.

"How much did you lose, Thorpe?" asked Fred.

"Two five-pound notes, some loose change, my scarf-pin and watch and chain," replied the young Englishman.

"All they got from me was a sovereign, some silver, and my pin. The pin is only rolled gold and cost me two bits in 'Frisco," chuckled Fred.

"Your friend, Manners, lost quite a number of notes. I saw the bunch when the rascal opened his pocketbook. They took his fine watch, chain and seals, his cuff buttons, studs and a gold enameled pin."

"It's pretty fierce that this kind of a thing is allowed to go on with a well-organized body of mounted constabulary scouring the country," said Fred.

"Well, you see, the scoundrels haven't been reported in this part of the country for some time. They've been working the east and north of the island, and I guess that is where the sharpest watch is being kept."

"They caught us in a nice lonesome spot, and at the bend in the road where we came on them suddenly. By the time the news of this hold-up

reaches the police I suppose the rascals will be some distance from here."

"Very likely. Their success is largely due to the rapidity with which they move around from place to place. They seldom commit two outrages in one locality unless they can be pulled off quick. It's as hard to catch them as to put your finger on a flea. They're here today and gone tomorrow."

"Well, you and I caught one of them at any rate, and I guess he'll get all that's coming to him," said Fred.

"He will undoubtedly get the limit at hard labor."

The passengers inside the coach were feeling pretty blue, and what they said about the road agents, and the backwardness of the constabulary in putting a stop to highway robbery, would have filled a good-sized book. Mr. Manners was particularly angry, for he prized his gold watch beyond any price, as it was the gift of a valued friend long dead. Beside it, the twenty pounds and other articles were comparatively insignificant. He declared with some vehemence that he would get Lyndock & Lyndock to write a special letter to the governor of the colony requesting a little more action on the part of the constabulary.

About sundown the coach drew up before the inn of Wayburn village for supper. It had covered about eighty miles since leaving Hobart Town, and this village was on the southern border of the gold belt. Fifteen miles further on was a crossroad, at which point Mr. Manners and Fred were to part from the coach. They expected to be met by John Cruise, the caretaker of the Sinclair farm, in a team, as a letter had been sent to him several days before notifying him that Lyndock and Lyndock's chief clerk and the heir to the property would be up by that day's stage.

When the hold-up was reported at the inn it caused considerable excitement. The road agents were denounced in round terms, and the constabulary criticized for their inability to round up the rascals. The robbed passengers were thrown on the generosity of the innkeeper for their supper, and he invited them all to eat at his expense. After an hour's wait the coach and passengers went on its way. It was now dark, but the sky was bright and clear, and before they had gone many miles the moon rose, and made the landscape almost as bright as day.

"A few miles more and we part for awhile, Thorpe," said Fred.

"Sorry to lose you, dear boy; but we'll meet again in Hobart Town," replied the young Englishman.

"I won't remain away very long, as Mr. Manners has got to return soon. I was thinking of going over to the gold diggings, but am not sure whether I'll get the chance," said Fred.

"Well, have a good time anyway."

"I'll try to."

They then got talking about something else, and time passed so quickly that before Fred knew they were near the crossroad the coach drew up at the spot. A burly looking man was

standing in the road, and he came up to the door of the coach.

"Well, Cruise, I see you're on hand," said Mr. Manners, as he alighted.

"Yes, sir. I got Mr. Lyndock's note and I came here with a team to meet you. Any luggage?"

"Only a couple of bags. The guard will give them to you."

By that time Fred, after bidding Thorpe, and his fellow-passengers on the roof, good-by, was down. He stood talking to Thorpe while the guard got the bags off the rack behind, which was only the work of a few moments. Then the driver cracked his whip and the coach rolled on its way.

"Follow me, Mr. Manners," said Cruise, taking a bag in each hand and starting for the place where he had left his team.

The law clerk and Fred fell in behind him. When they reached the team Cruise tossed the bags into it and said he would help Mr. Manners up to the middle seat.

"One minute, Cruise. Let me make you acquainted with Fred Sinclair, nephew of the late John Sinclair. He is the heir to the farm. And I brought him down to show him around his property."

"Glad to know you, young man," said Cruise, holding out his hand.

As Fred took it the moon sailed from behind a fleecy cloud and threw its light across the man's countenance. The boy gave a start of surprise, not to say consternation. He recognized John Cruise as the ruffian he had knocked down at the free-and-easy for trying to kiss Ruby Ransom against her will. And it was plain that Cruise knew him, too, for he started back with a smothered imprecation.

CHAPTER VII.—In Which Cruise Explains.

Mr. Manners did not take notice of the strained situation for Fred was too dumbfounded to say a word, while Cruise hastily recovered his composure, and the thought flashed through his mind that the only thing he could do to save himself from exposure was to bluff the matter out. Accordingly he assumed a friendly attitude toward the young American, and, after assisting Mr. Manners up on the center seat, invited Fred to ride on the front seat with him.

Fred was about to decline in a dignified way, intending to bring the matter to the attention of Mr. Manners on their way to the farm, when the idea struck him that there was a bare possibility that he might be mistaken in the man, for it did not seem reasonable that Cruise, the caretaker of his late uncle's property, and a farmer by profession, could be the reckless rascal he had encountered that night in Hobart Town. He decided to accept Cruise's offer and see whether he could get the man to betray himself in some way that would make the identification a certainty. Cruise lost no time in starting off up the cross road.

"This is a fine country," he said to Fred, with a sweep of the whip.

"I'll have to take your word for it, as I'm a stranger in these parts," replied the boy.

"How long have you been on the island?"

"Not much over a week."

"You are not from England are you? You don't strike me as an English lad."

"No. I'm an American. I came from California."

"Oh, yes, I remember now that Mr. Sinclair was from the United States. Are you his only relative?"

"I am, as far as I know."

"I have only one brother myself," said Cruise, who had thought out the scheme he hoped would turn suspicion from himself. "We are twins, and look so much alike that only when we're together can we be told apart."

"Is that so?" replied Fred, with considerable interest.

"Yes. I regret to say that he has turned out badly. He is a reckless chap who has been in trouble with the authorities more times than I can count. I have even heard that he is suspected of being connected with the Redlaw road agents."

"Yes," said Fred, in surprise. "If you look so much like him I should think that would make things awkward for you."

"It does. I haven't been off the farm, except to make trips to Wayburn village or once in a while to Blackpool, for over a year, chiefly on account of my brother. I'm actually afraid to go to Hobart Town for fear I should be arrested by a member of the mounted constabulary who might be in town and see me."

"But you could easily prove that you are not your brother by sending for Mr. Manners," said Fred.

"Yes, I could do that; but that would expose the relationship. I have told no one but you and your late uncle that I am handicapped by such a brother."

"Then Mr. Manners doesn't know that you have a twin brother with a hard reputation?" said Fred.

"No."

Fred, who had been inclined to credit Cruise's story, now began to suspect that the man was lying.

"I suppose it was your brother I met in a free-and-easy in Hobart Town, the evening of the day I arrived on the island?" he said, thinking he might draw some admission from Cruise that would prove that the brother statement was a piece of fiction.

"It must have been him, for it wasn't me," replied the man, showing no surprise at the question, or at the fact that the boy should have met his alleged brother.

"If you are afraid to go to Hobart Town on account of your likeness to your brother, he does not appear to be afraid to show himself there," said Fred.

"He always was a reckless fellow," replied Cruise.

"I should say so. He came very near shooting me."

"How was that?" asked Cruise with simulated surprise.

"He insulted a young singer connected with the

house, and I let him see that she had one protector present, even if he was only a boy."

"And he tried to shoot you for knocking him down, eh?" said Cruise.

As Fred had said nothing about knocking the ruffian down this remark of the farmer rather confirmed his impression that Cruise was the rascal he had had the trouble with.

"Yes. He drew his gun on me, but the girl sprang in from of me and saved me. Your brother must be a cowardly rascal to pull a weapon on an unarmed boy."

"He was probably excited and did not know what he was doing," explained the man, through his teeth.

"It's a good thing for both of us that he didn't shoot, for had he killed me he never would have lived to get out of that saloon."

"Think so?" sneered Cruise. "You don't know him. He and his pals would have fought their way out in spite of Joe Hallyard and his bunch of gold diggers."

"That settles it," thought Fred. "I never said a word about him having any pals at the free-and-easy or mentioned Hallyard's name. How could Cruise know that Hallyard and his friends were present unless he was there himself?"

Having satisfied himself now of Cruise's real identity Fred remained silent. He intended to expose the fellow to Mr. Manners at the first chance, and suggest that the quicker he was sent away from the farm the better.

"I'm sorry you ran against my brother and had trouble with him," said Cruise after a pause, during which he cast a furtive look at the boy. "When Mr. Manners introduced us you must have been surprised at my resemblance to the man who, as you say, tried to shoot you at the free-and-easy."

"I admit you look as like him as one pea to another."

"And your first idea was that I was the same man, wasn't it?"

"It struck me you were."

"Well, now you know I'm not, don't you?"

"I suppose I must take your word for it," replied Fred, evasively.

"You needn't take my word alone. My wife will bear me out. I couldn't very well be in two places at one time, could I?"

"Not very well."

"Well, then, my wife will tell you that I haven't been away from the farm a night for a month. That proves that I couldn't have been in Hobart Town on the evening you mentioned."

Cruise spoke as if he considered his statement clinched the case in his favor. Fred didn't accept it as such. He was satisfied that Cruise had no twin brother, and he was equally convinced that Mrs. Cruise would bear out any statement advanced by her husband, whether true or not. However, Fred didn't deem it wise to let the farmer think he doubted his words so he said that so far as the incident at the free-and-easy concerned him he considered it closed, and that it wasn't worth discussing any further.

"But I want to satisfy you that it was my brother and not me with whom you had the trouble," persisted Cruise.

"I told you that I would take your word for it," replied Fred.

Cruise appeared to be satisfied, though really he was not. Fred's manner spoke louder than his words, and the farmer believed the boy still had his suspicions. They drove along a while in silence, Fred's attention being concentrated on the country, which lay calm and peaceful in the light of the moon, while Cruise was busy with his thoughts, which were not at all friendly toward the boy by his side. At this point Mr. Manners spoke up for the first time since they left the main road.

"See here, Cruise, I suppose it will astonish you to learn that the coach on which we came up was held up some miles below Wayburn village by that gang of ruffians known as the Redlaw road agents."

"What, you don't mean it, sir?" said the farmer, apparently much surprised by the intelligence.

"I do mean it," replied the law clerk in forcible tones. "We were all robbed. Cleaned out of everything we had on our persons. I lost among other things a gold watch that I place great value on because it was a present from an old friend. I think this business has gone altogether too far. It is simply outrageous that the authorities cannot put a stop to it. I shall make it my business to see that the governor's attention is called to it in a way that ought to cause him to take the matter in hand as a special public exigency."

"Why, sir, I thought the Redlaw gang were operating on the eastern side of the island," said Cruise.

"It seems to me they are operating on all sides of the island," replied Mr. Manners testily.

"At any rate it is something new for them to come into this neighborhood."

"New or not I have lost my money, my watch and chain, and other articles I would not willingly have lost for thrice their value. In fact the scoundrels did not leave me a penny. It will, therefore, be impossible for me to pay you the money intrusted to me to deliver to you."

"Never mind that, sir. I can wait till another time," replied Cruise, cheerfully. "Since you say you've been cleaned out completely I shall be glad to lend you whatever money you will require to pay your way back to town. I suppose you were robbed also, young man," he added, turning to Fred.

"I was; but my loss was slight, as I didn't have six pounds altogether about me," replied the boy.

A turn in the road now brought them in sight of the farm. Cruise turned up a lane, the gate of which stood wide open, and a few minutes later drove into the yard between the farmhouse and outbuildings. The buildings were all of primitive kind, having been erected by the original owner of the property long before John Sinclair took possession of the place. He had improved the house, building sundry additions to it, and adding such modern improvements as he could afford to install. Nevertheless, it looked very antiquated to Fred, and the outbuildings seemed to be much the worse for many years' wear and tear.

Fred noted these facts in the bright moonlight. Had it been daylight their defects and shortcomings would have appeared much worse. On the whole Fred did not entertain a very high opinion of his legacy, but he hoped that it would turn out to be better than it looked to him. Cruise reined up in front of the back door just as it was opened and a middle-aged woman, with a lamp in her hands, appeared to welcome Mr. Manners and the heir of the property.

CHAPTER VIII.—What Fred Overheard.

Mr. Manners introduced Fred to Mrs. Cruise, the housekeeper, and the boy found her, contrary to his expectations, a very pleasant little woman. He noticed that she looked worried and nervous, as if haunted by the dread of some threatened trouble. She gave the boy a warm welcome, and assumed a cheerful deportment, but Fred noticed that her greeting and conversation seemed a bit forced. She had a palatable supper waiting on the table, and invited them to sit right down to it.

"You might have saved yourself the trouble of preparing anything for us. Mrs. Cruise, for we had a hearty supper at Wayburn where we put up after we were stopped and robbed by the Redlaw road agents," said the law clerk.

Mrs. Cruise started violently on hearing the name of Redlaw mentioned. She flushed up and looked quite frightened.

"Don't be alarmed, madam," said Mr. Manners. "It isn't likely they will pay you a visit, as there is very little about the farm to attract them. In order to be on the safe side, however, I would advise you to hide any money you may have in the house, and put what treasures you value in some safe spot until you are assured they have left the neighborhood."

"I have very little to lose," she replied in a choked voice.

"Little or much it would be a shame to have it fall into the hands of those scoundrels," said the law clerk, seating himself at the table, an example followed by Fred.

While they were eating sparingly of the supper, Mr. Manners described to the housekeeper how the stage had been held up and looted, and the passengers robbed of everything they had on their persons. She listened in an absent-minded kind of way, and when he finished she said something in a low, nervous tone that Fred did not catch. After awhile Cruise himself came in, and the young American saw him look at his wife in a way that was not pleasant. Indeed, the look was a menacing one, and the little woman seemed to shrink under it like a flower wilted by the hot sun.

After that the farmer himself carried on a monopoly of the conversation, mostly with Mr. Manners, while Fred sat back and listened. Mrs. Cruise herself clearing up the table, after which she retired with the dishes to the kitchen. Several times Fred noticed that she cast furtive looks in his direction, and he wondered somewhat at her conduct, which he ascribed to curiosity. At length Mr. Manners said he was going to bed, so Cruise got a couple of lamps and led the way upstairs

to the floor above. He showed the law clerk into a large room at one end of the house, while he introduced Fred into a smaller one adjoining the apartment used by himself and his wife.

"I dare say you're tired enough to sleep well tonight, young man," he said, as he placed the lamp on the table. "Put out the light as soon as you are through with it. The moon is so bright you hardly need any light to undress by."

Then he said good-night and withdrew. Fred was not at all sleepy notwithstanding his long stage ride. The situation was so new to him that he did not believe he would get to sleep very soon. After removing his jacket, necktie and collar, he blew out the lamp seating himself beside the open window looked out upon the neighboring landscape. The weather was warm, it being then about the middle of December. The change from the life and bustle of Hobart Town to the quietude and lonesomeness of the country had a kind of depressing effect on Fred now that he was alone. To this was added the fact that the man in charge of the farm was evidently a wolf masquerading in sheep's clothing.

"I am satisfied that this Cruise is a scoundrel, and I wouldn't be surprised if he was connected in some way with the Redlaw road agents. His story about having a twin brother is a pure fake. He told me that yarn to allay my suspicions. Well, Mr. Manners shall hear my story in the morning."

Then Fred's thoughts reverted to Mrs. Cruise.

"She doesn't look nor act like a woman who was a partner in her husband's rascalities," he mused. "She acts rather like a woman who was oppressed by some weighty secret that was preying on her mind. That she is afraid of Cruise seems evident to me. I'll bet she is not a bad woman, but is unfortunate in being linked to such a man."

Although Fred was wide awake when he took his seat by the window, the silence and warmth of the night soon had a somnolent effect on him and he grew drowsy. He lay back and closed his eyes as he continued to figure up the situation at the farm and map out his plans for bringing about a change. Before he had any idea that sleep would overtake him in his chair he was as sound as a bell with his head resting against the wooden partition behind him.

The old house with its additions was not finished in lath and plaster like most dwellings. In place thereof the partitions dividing the rooms were merely covered with the tightly drawn coarse cloth on both sides which was covered with wall paper. In the course of time the boards forming the partition naturally shrunk, leaving crevices between them. Consequently conversation carried on, even in comparatively low tones, in the room could easily be heard in the adjoining ones.

Fred slept quietly on for more than an hour, and then his slumber was disturbed by a disquieting dream in which John Cruise was the chief figure. It seemed to the boy as if he was in a dark wood somewhere, on the edge of a clearing. In the opening three men sat on a fallen trunk talking, and they were talking about him and plotting to take his life. He recognized them as Cruise and two of the three ruffians he had seen at the free-and-easy.

He could hear all they said and they evidently

meant business. How he came to be in that wood listening to the men did not seem to afford him any wonder. While he was taking in all that passed between the rascals he suddenly woke up and found himself in the chair by the open window with the moonlight playing on his face.

"So it was only a dream after all," he muttered; "but it seemed to be pretty real."

At that moment his ear caught the sound of men's voices in the next room. They sounded much like those he had heard in his dream. He easily recognized the tones of Cruise's voice. He was saying something at the moment and instinctively Fred strained his ears to catch what he was talking about, for somehow it struck him that he was the subject of the conversation.

"That boy is dangerous to me," said Cruise. "I feel that I have only lulled his suspicions as to my identity. If he has a talk with Manners on the subject it will likely lead to complications. Besides I owe him something for the blow he gave me in the free-and-easy. No man has ever struck me with impunity, and I shall not take it from a boy. He has shown himself to be a plucky chap, which is a further reason why he should be taken care of. I'd like to have a dozen like him in the band. I'll warrant we'd make things more interesting than ever for the constabulary."

"Well, what are yer goin' to do with him?" asked another voice in coarse tones.

"He is asleep in the next room, tired after his long coach ride," said Cruise. "He is in our power and we'll take advantage of the fact. A few whiffs of chloroform will prevent him from waking up for many hours. As soon as I've dosed him one of you will pick him up and carry him downstairs, after shoving him into his clothes. You will then mount your horses and ride with him to our present rendezvous in this district. There you will keep him a prisoner until I come and the band decides on his fate. If he can be induced to join us——"

"I don't believe he's that kind of chap," said another voice. "It would be dangerous to take chances with him."

"When he finds that it's a case of life or death with him he may be willing to cast his lot with us. I'd like to have such a chap as he, for one of my lieutenants. We must manage to commit him to our business, and then when he finds that he is in the toils we'll be sure of him. That's the way it was with Hoardly. He became one of us against his will, and now he's the most daring assistant I have."

"Well, cap, you are the boss, but I can't say that I like the plan of breakin' that boy in. I'll bet you'll find it a hard job."

"Leave that to me. However, the main thing to be considered at present is to get him away from this farm and prevent the possibility of his exposing me. As John Cruise the farmer, I have been able to go about and gather information in this district that will be of great value to the band. I have made friends with the miners, and found out who are the successful ones, and how and when they ship their dust to Blackpool. In a few days we shall be able to sweep down on the diggings and make a haul that will cap anything we have hitherto done in the way of plunder. So you see it never would

do for my real identity to be exposed at this stage of the game."

"That's right," laughed one of the men. "It wouldn't be healthy for you, cap, if the people around here learned that Cruise, the farmer, was Redlaw, the road agent."

CHAPTER IX.—Fred's Desperate Ride.

"Redlaw the road agent!" gasped Fred as the revelation of John Cruise's dual personality reached his ears.

He was so startled that one of his elbows struck the partition a sharp blow. The three men in the next room heard the sound and started to their feet in some consternation. What was that? ejaculated Cruise.

"It came from that wall," said Bowser, one of his companions.

"The boy is in that room," said Cruise, in a whisper. "Can it be that he's awake and has overheard our conversation?"

"We'd better find out," said the other man, whose name was Furlong.

"Follow me," said Cruise, striding toward the door.

"They are coming in here," thought Fred. "They'll find me up, dressed and awake, and they'll understand that I've been a listener and know what their intentions are toward me. How shall I protect myself against them? I'll lock the door. They'll hardly dare to break it down, as that would make a noise which would arouse Mr. Manners and lead to complications for them."

Fred rushed to the door, but to his dismay he found that there was no key in the lock, either inside or outside. Apparently the occupants of the house did not consider it necessary to lock their doors, or else Cruise had removed the key for reasons of his own.

"What shall I do?" muttered the boy. "I have no time to barricade myself in. Oh, if I only had a revolver now I'd make things hot for the scoundrels."

But he didn't have a revolver, and so he hardly knew what to do. Then it was that his eyes lighter on the open window. It suggested an avenue of escape. He heard the men's footsteps in the corridor outside, so there was no time to be lost. He sprang toward the window and looked out. With the moon shining brightly everything was as clear as day. He saw that it was not a great distance to the ground outside. He put one leg across the sill and was following with the other when the door opened and Cruise looked into the room. His sharp eyes took in the situation at a glance. The boy had got wise to their intentions and was trying to save himself.

"Here, where are you going, Sinclair?" he said, rushing to the window.

Fred wasn't stopping to make any explanation. He let go and sprang backward into the air, alighting in the yard with the agility of a monkey.

"What in thunder does this mean?" roared Cruise, looking down at him.

"It means that I have discovered who you are

and I intend to have you hunted down at once—you and your band of road agents."

Thus speaking Fred started for the lane, intending to make his way to a farmhouse he had seen down the road. Redlaw, for hereafter we shall call him by his right name, uttered an imprecation as he saw his prey escaping from the trap he had prepared for him.

"Follow me," he cried to his companions. "He must be caught at once."

He slipped out of the window, with Bowser and Furlong close behind him. As they started in pursuit of the fugitive Fred reached the lane.

He flew down it at a pace that showed he was a good runner.

"Mount your horses and make after him," cried Redlaw. "You're bound to overhaul him before he can get far."

When Fred reached the open gate at the road he heard the rapid thud of horses' hoofs behind him. He realized at once that he would have to make a change in his plans. If he kept to the road he was sure to be caught. He would have to vault the fence and hide behind the hedge, changing his position as circumstances called for.

He acted on this plan, and so when the two road agents reached the road he was nowhere to be seen. They at once suspected the course he had adopted, but they could not tell which side of the road he was on.

"We must hunt for him," said Furlong. "You take that side and I'll take this. The cap will be here in a minute or two as soon as he can get his horse out of the stable."

They dismounted, tied their animals to the fence and began to beat the hedge on both sides of the road. Furlong was the man Fred had to avoid, and at first it seemed easy to do so. But after proceeding for a short distance the hedge suddenly ceased, and to make a dash across the open space was to reveal his whereabouts at once.

"What shall I do now?" the boy asked himself.

It occurred to Fred that by crawling through the fence he might be able to double on his pursuer. It was a risky proceeding, and would expose him to the sight of Bowser, who was beating the opposite hedge.

Bowser, however, was hidden by the hedge, though Fred could tell where he was by the noise he made. The chances were that the man's attention was too much occupied with his task to have eyes for anything that was happening on the opposite side of the road. Having summed up the situation Fred decided to risk a flank movement. Pushing through the hedge he ran swiftly down the road without attracting attention from his enemies.

He soon came to the spot where the two horses were tied. He determined to try and make his escape on one of them.

"I'll take the other horse in tow, and that will leave them without means of following me," he thought.

Quickly detaching both horses from the fence he sprang into the saddle of one and taking the other by the bridle was about to start down the road when Redlaw himself dashed into the road from the lane, and cut him off in that direction. The only thing Fred could do was to make off in the opposite direction, which would take him

away from the road followed by the coach, which it was his object to reach.

The direction he was forced to take led directly into the heart of the gold fields, but of that fact he was, of course, unaware. Before he had gone fifty feet Redlaw, well mounted, was in his pursuit. Fred soon saw that the led horse was a big handicap to him, for the captain of the road agents was rapidly overtaking him. Accordingly he cast the animal off, and digging his heels into the flanks of the stallion he rode urged him to top speed. The animal was evidently accustomed to rapid traveling, for he put his best foot forward and carried the boy up the road like the wind.

But Redlaw was mounted on a fleet animal, and before long Fred saw that he had small chance of shaking the rascal off. For fifteen minutes the two riders maintained the same relative distance, and the road agent grew impatient over the chase.

"Stop!" he shouted in stentorian tones. "Stop, or I'll shoot!"

Fred made no effort to stop and a moment later he heard the sharp crack of his pursuer's revolver and a bullet whizzed past his ears.

The boy ducked unconsciously, but it was a useless precaution, for the ball was many yards ahead of him when he did so. Fred was no coward, and though this was the first time he had ever heard the wind of a bullet it did not cause him to stop in his headlong flight. Glancing over his shoulder he saw Redlaw taking aim at him again. He bent as low as possible over his animal's neck and the ball flew harmlessly past above his head. Redlaw swore some at the two misses and did not fire again for a while, during which he urged his horse to greater speed. The road wound in and out through a rugged and unfrequented landscape. There were houses here and there in the distance, but Fred did not see them.

His whole attention was given to an effort to maintain a respectable distance between himself and his pursuer. After an interval Redlaw fired again. Fred's animal gave a snort and a plunge as if he had been hit by the bullet. He kept on, however, with unabated speed, so the boy guessed he was not injured much. Redlaw's fourth bullet went wild and he stopped shooting. There was a branch road close at hand hidden by trees, and Fred didn't see it.

The horse dashed into it of his own accord. Redlaw followed and the race continued for another mile when the road narrowed to a mere beaten track across a wilderness of rocks, trees and wild shrubs. The stallion picked his way along of his own accord, as Fred made no effort to guide him. At length the boy saw a wide stream ahead of him, shimmering in the moonlight. A little way ahead he saw a rowboat with the oars in it tied to the shore. Here was the chance to give his pursuer the slip and get across the river. The moment he came up to it he reined in his animal, sprang off his back and ran down to the boat. A moment sufficed to undo the painter, and seizing an oar he shoved off. The current of the stream was very rapid and the boat was whirled quickly out toward the middle of the river. At that moment Redlaw reached the

point where Fred had embarked, and seeing the horse he had abandoned looked around for the boy. It was some moments before he discovered that Fred had taken to the water.

The river was too deep and swift for him to think of following on horseback, but he followed the course of the boat for awhile along the bank. Finally seeing that the boy had him where the hair was short he stopped and emptied his revolver at the fugitive. It was a useless waste of powder and shot, and so, with a string of imprecations at the futility of his efforts to capture Fred, he shook his fist at him, then turned his horse and slowly rode the way back home.

CHAPTER X.—Fred at a Mining Camp.

The country around looked so wild and barren that Fred concluded not to land for the present. So he let the boat take its own course, which it did, propelled at a rapid rate along the stream. Time passed, the moon sank out of sight behind the distant hills, and still the boat pursued its lonesome way through the wilderness. Fred hadn't the faintest idea where he was going or where he would fetch up.

"I'm thinking that I'm in a pretty fierce position," thought Fred, as he lounged back in the stern of the boat. "If I wanted to find my way back to the farm I couldn't do it to save my life. It's miles and miles back somewhere yonder. As things stand I'm lost in the wilderness, and how I'm going to get out of my predicament is more than I can figure out at this moment. To add to my troubles I haven't a cent to pay my way in case I reach a town or village. From the general character of the landscape I'm not likely to meet with either very soon. I would like to strike a house though, for I'm feeling kind of fagged out. It must be well along in the morning by this time. I've a great mind to pull in to the bank, tie-up and take a sleep."

He decided to wait till he saw a likely spot to land. While looking for such a spot his eyes grew heavy, and before long he was sound asleep, and the boat carried him along just as well as if he were awake. At length the drift of the current carried the little craft into a creek and it floated along for a mile or more at decreasing speed. Finally it floated into slack water and came to a rest against a half-submerged fallen tree near the shore. Morning was well along when he was awakened by the touch of a man's hand on his shoulder and a rough, hearty voice in his ear.

"Wake up, young fellow, and give an account of yourself."

Fred sat up with a start and looked into the face of a bearded, sunburned man.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Who are you?"

"Who am I?" chuckled the stranger. "Why, I'm Bud Baxter, of the New Eldorado mining camp and now who are you?"

"I'm Fred Sinclair, and I'm lost in the wilderness."

"Lost in the wilderness are you; you mean you're stranded in the gold fields."

"I'm stranded all right, for I haven't a cent."

"Haven't a copper, eh?" ejaculated the man in

surprise. "How come you to be afloat in this boat all by yourself?"

"I found it on the other side of this river last night when——"

"On the other side of this river? This hain't a river, it's a creek."

"Why, so it is," replied Fred in surprise, as he looked around. "The last thing I remember I was being carried by the current down a good-sized river."

"That river is more'n a mile away. The boat carried you into this creek while you were asleep."

"Where am I anyway?"

"In a general way you're in the diggin's."

"What! the gold diggings?"

"There ain't no other kind of diggin's that I know of."

"What part of the gold fields am I in?"

"In the eastern section."

"All sections are alike to me. How far off is Blackpool?"

"A hundred mile or so."

"So far? I'll never be able to reach it on foot."

"On foot! I should say not."

"What town or village is nearer?"

"There's Wayburn about twenty mile or there-about yonder, on the other side of the river. Then there's Wildgorse about thirty mile over yonder. You'd need a hoss to reach it. But you haven't told me how you come to be afloat and without a copper."

"I took to the boat to escape from Redlaw the road agent."

"To escape from who?"

"Redlaw the road agent."

"Why, that chap ain't in this here part of the country."

"Ain't he? Well he is just the same."

"Seems to me we'd heard somethin' about it if he was."

"You're hearing about it now from me."

"How do you know he's here?"

"Because I've met him and a number of his gang."

"Where did you meet 'em?"

"Six of his gang held up the stage I was on a few miles south of Wayburn yesterday afternoon and cleaned us out of everything we had about us."

"The deuce you say," exclaimed the miner.

"That's right," nodded Fred. "Ever heard of a farmer around here called John Cruise?"

The miner shook his head.

"He and his wife have been in charge of a farm left to me by my uncle. The business that brought me out here from Hobart Town with the chief clerk of a law firm of that town was to look over the property. We were met at the crossroad by this Cruise I mentioned and taken to the farm. Before I had been there many hours I made the important discovery that Cruise was not what we supposed him to be, but is really Redlaw the road agent in disguise."

"You surprise me, young man."

"You won't be the only one that will be surprised at the unmasking of the rascal. His object in masquerading as John Cruise, a farmer, was to obtain information that the band he commands can make use of at the proper time. I heard him tell two of his men last night that he

has picked up a lot of valuable information about the miners who have been the most successful at the diggings. It is the purpose of the band to swoop down on the gold fields shortly and plunder every man they can reach who is worth robbing."

"You don't say. If what you say is so your news is important. You must come to camp with me and tell the boys."

"I'll do that with pleasure, for I haven't any idea where I'm at. I'm stranded, as you remarked a few moments ago. If you hadn't come upon me I might have wandered around this neighborhood till I starved."

"No danger of you starvin' this trip. There's plenty to eat at our camp, and you shall have all you can stuff under your veskit. Come along. We shall get there about breakfast time."

They reached a collection of wooden huts that formed the camp in about fifteen minutes, and here Fred found perhaps thirty rough-looking sunburned men.

"Boys," said Bud Baxter, "let me introduce you to a young chap who is stranded here in the gold fields. After he's had a bite to eat he'll tell you somethin' that'll open your eyes."

He sat down with a good appetite to a repast of fried bacon, corn cake and hot coffee, and when the meal was over he told the story of his experiences since leaving Hobart Town the preceding morning. The news that Redlaw and his band of road agents were in the vicinity was received with general surprise. The men would have been inclined to doubt it only for the straightforward way in which Fred told his story. Two or three of the men had met the man who claimed to be John Cruise, and they were amazed at Fred's declaration that he was really Redlaw himself.

"So them chaps are plannin' to loot the gold fields, eh?" said a miner.

"That is clearly their intention," replied Fred.

"They'll get a lot of trouble if they try it."

After discussing the matter from all points it was decided that one of the miners, accompanied by Fred, should make a tour of the camps of the gold field and warn the miners about the advent of Redlaw and his band in that locality. Lots were drawn and the mission fell to Bud Baxter. The rest of the party, with the exception of the cook, then went off to work, while Baxter and Fred, mounted on a pair of horses, started for the nearest diggings.

CHAPTER XI.—The Lane of Death.

During the ride Fred told Baxter the object that had brought him to Tasmania.

"So you're the nephew of old John Sinclair, eh?" said the miner.

"Yes, sir."

"What are you goin' to do with it when you get possession of the farm?"

"Haven't thought anything about the matter yet."

"You might start in and learn to be a farmer."

"I don't think I'd care for the life, especially away out here in the wilds."

"If you didn't want to work the place you might sell it if you could find some one that would take it off your hands. What's the place worth?"

"I couldn't tell you. I haven't the least idea."

"Them lawyers ought to know somethin' about it. Why don't you ask 'em?"

"I will when I get back to town."

"Now that you've found out the true character of John Cruise you'll have to find somebody else to look after the place."

"I don't suppose there'll be any trouble doing that. I feel very sorry for Mrs. Cruise, I mean Mrs. Redlaw. I know now why she looked so worried and trouble haunted. It was the secret knowledge of her husband's true character. She is not at all in sympathy with the business he is following, and she knows it is only a question of time before he'll see his finish."

"It's funny how some women will hang on to a man no matter how crooked he is. It's one of the weaknesses of the sex," said Baxter.

"I'd like to do something for her. If she could only be induced to leave him I'd be glad to let her remain on the farm."

"Them kind of women never cut loose from their husbands of their own accord though it strikes me that owing to the nature of his business they don't live much together. Didn't you say that Mrs. Cruise was your uncle's housekeeper for awhile before he died?"

"So Mr. Lyndock told me."

"And where was her husband then?"

"I didn't hear."

"It's easy to judge that he was away with that band of his which has been robbin' the community for more'n a year. In fact I heard of them road agents all of two years ago."

"That's a long time for them to be able to evade justice."

"Oh, they know the country like a book. There are hundreds of places where they can hide away from pursuit. I'll bet they've got a score of secret meetin' places, stocked with grub, in different parts of the island. When the constabulary gets particularly active they disappear and you don't hear nothin' more from 'em till things simmer down, then they turn up all of a sudden in a different part of the island, and there's another howl in the newspapers about their depredations. They ain't been on the west side here for all of a year, and no one was expectin' 'em to turn up. That's the way they do."

"Well, it's time they were broke up for good."

"I should say so."

"That's the camp yonder we're making for, I suppose," said Fred, pointing to a bunch of habitations, partly huts and partly tents, situated in a wild and rocky glen covered with brush.

"That's the first place we stop at. The men don't seem to be at work this mornin'. Must be somethin' up. Maybe they've got the news already about the road agents, and are makin' plans to head 'em off."

Five minutes later Fred and Baxter rode into the camp and were immediately surrounded by a crowd of men whose faces were unfamiliar to the miner. To Fred there was nothing strange about the hard-looking crowd, but it was different with Baxter. He failed to see a familiar countenance and was satisfied there was something wrong.

"I'm afraid, sonny, that we've fallen among sharks," he said in a low tone to the boy.

"What do you mean?" asked Fred in surprise.

"These here men are all strangers to me, and

they don't look a bit like miners. I'm afraid to say what I think."

The men had addressed them jocosely, and while two took hold of the bridles of their horses and led them toward a big tent, the storehouse of the camp—the rest surrounded them and followed.

Before the boy could make any reply to Baxter's misgivings the flap of the tent was thrown aside and a big, ruffiantly looking man stepped outside and confronted them. As Fred's eyes rested on him he gave a gasp. The man was Redlaw the road agent. Redlaw gave a start of surprise on recognizing Fred. Then a malicious grin spread over his features.

"So, young man, you've thought better of runnin' away from me and have dropped in here to say you're sorry that you gave me so much trouble last night," he said in a bantering tone.

"I guess you know well enough that isn't so," replied Fred, who had recovered his self-possession. "It strikes me that you and your crowd have captured this camp, and we have ridden into a trap."

"You're clever at guessing, you are," laughed Redlaw. "Now that I've got hold of you perhaps you can guess what's likely to happen to you?"

"I dare say that you'd like me to join your band," replied Fred, remembering the conversation he had overheard the previous night; "but I prefer to choose my own company."

An ugly look appeared on Redlaw's face at the boy's bold words.

"There's a saying that beggars can't be choosers. If I offer you the chance to join us you'll join or take the consequences," he said, menacingly.

"You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink," retorted Fred, fearlessly.

"There are more ways than one of killing a cat," said Redlaw, significantly. "I've sized you up as just the kind of chap we want. If you throw your fortunes in with us I'll forgive you the blow you gave me in the free-and-easy and all the trouble I had with you you last night. You'll find our life is an easy and a merry one. You'll always have coins in your pocket, and as much excitement as you care for. That farm you came here to claim ain't worth two pounds an acre all told. You'll pick up the value of it, if you join us, in less than a week. We're going through these gold diggings like a whirlwind on a rampage. By the time we get through the fields will look as if a swarm of locusts had passed over it. We'll have gold enough tucked away in our saddle bags to last us a year or more, and every mother's son of us will have a swell time on the strength of it. That's the prospect I offer you, and you may consider yourself lucky that you're so favored. You can give me your answer now or take an hour to think it over."

"I'll give you my answer now."

"You accept, eh?"

"No, I refuse. I wouldn't join you and your bunch if I was sure of making a million and would have a sure chance of enjoying it to boot."

The crowd of road agents who were looking on showed some astonishment at the boy's answer. His resolute demeanor instead of rousing their admiration excited their anger. Redlaw's eyes flashed with furious disappointment. The boy

was made of the stuff he wanted in his band. He was fearless and evidently a game fighter from the scratch.

"Take him off his horse, bind his arms and carry him to yonder tent," cried the road agent to his men.

Fred offered no resistance because he hadn't the ghost of a show to escape. Redlaw issued similar directions concerning Bud Baxter, and the miner soon found himself a prisoner in the eating-house of the camp, where the miners who belonged to the place were sitting around gagged and bound, and under guard.

At the end of half an hour the road agent visited Fred by himself.

"Now, young man," he said, in a tone that meant business, "the boys have decided to make an example of you. You're to be given a chance for your life, though it's a slim one. The only way you can escape the ordeal is to reconsider your determination and join us."

"I'd rather take my chances than associate myself with your band," replied Fred.

"Is that your final determination?"

"It is."

Redlaw stepped to the door and called two men inside.

"Fetch him out and place him at the head of the line," he said.

Fred was marched outside and saw before him a double row of men armed with clubs and shovels which they held up ready for business, while on every face rested a look of anticipated satisfaction.

"Now then," said Redlaw, with a diabolical grin, to Fred. "You see what's before you. If you get through that gauntlet you're free to go where you please."

The boy looked at the ominous lane to be traversed and shuddered.

CHAPTER XII.—A Hot Time.

To run that gauntlet under the most favorable circumstances was a desperate venture for any one, no matter how swift of foot; but to attempt it with his hands bound behind his back, as Fred's were, was certain death if the rascals chose to mete that fate out to him.

"When I count three you start," he said, "or I'll put a bullet in you. I'll give you one minute to say your prayer, or to join the band and save yourself. When time is up I'll begin to count, and that will mark your finish."

Redlaw was determined to make him join his band or do him up. Fred abhorred the idea of even saving his life by accepting the alternative offered him. For an instant the thought flashed through his mind to accept the rascal's terms, and then make his escape at the first opportunity. While he hesitated he gave his hands an involuntary twist, and felt the strands that held his wrists together loosen. A sudden thrill of hope coursed through his blood. He gave another tug and drew one hand free. Turning like a flash he butted his head against Redlaw's stomach. The rascal dropped his revolver and half doubled up with a string of imprecations. Without the loss

of a minute Fred stooped, picked up the weapon and stepping back a couple of paces covered Redlaw with the muzzle.

"The first man that covers me signs Redlaw's death warrant," said Fred, in a firm tone. "I've got my finger on the trigger. Put up your guns if you value your leader's life."

The rascals hesitated. Fred was well aware that if he had to shoot Redlaw his own life would be sacrificed a moment later. If he could escape into the brush a few yards away he might be able to give the band the slip, return to the Eldorado mining camp and lead the miners of that place to the rescue of Bud Baxter and the men who belonged to the camp captured by the rascally road agents.

The chances were, however, that the moment he took his attention off Redlaw he would be shot down like a dog before he could run a dozen feet.

As he calculated his desperate chances a sudden disturbance arose in the building where the prisoners were confined. There was a crack of revolver, and the man on guard staggered out at the door and dropped in a heap. Bud Baxter and another man appeared at the door with drawn guns and opened fire on the ruffians. Fred took advantage of the fresh excitement to back away, and his movements escaped the attention of all but Redlaw. He considered it wise to say nothing, as he saw that Fred kept him covered all the time. The fight at the shanty grew hotter every minute as the prisoners were releasing themselves and joining in the fray. The rascals had made a bad blunder in failing to disarm their prisoners. At last Fred thought he was in a position to make a dash for the brush, and he did so. The moment he turned Redlaw made a dive for his horse to get his second revolver. By the time he got hold of it Fred was out of sight. The boy instead of making off as he originally intended felt that it was his duty to help the miners beat off the road agents.

Fred circled around the camp and was close to the cook house when the men came out with the rifles, each man carrying several in his arms to hand over to his comrades who were peppering the miners with their revolvers.

"I'm afraid it will soon be all up with the gold diggers," muttered the boy when he saw the guns. "I must do something to try and save them."

At a desperate risk he opened fire on the men with the rifles. They were taken at a disadvantage and as they staggered over the wounded under his rapid shooting they got an idea reinforcements were coming to the camp, and those who escaped Fred's bullets ran off toward their comrades with the arms they had. Fred cast his useless revolver aside, having emptied all the cartridges, and dashing forward secured two of the guns and retreated safely to the shelter of the brush from whence he opened fire on the road agents with the magazine rifles.

He moved around when several of the rascals were ordered by Redlaw to return the fire, and their shots went nowhere near him. At that moment the miners, finding themselves hard pressed, broke open the back of the shanty and rushed to cover, leaving half a dozen of their comrades hors du combat, while at least ten of the ruffians

were put out of action, most of them having been wounded more or less badly.

With a shout of triumph the road agents pursued the gold diggers, but the men scattered in the bush and the rascals finally gave up pursuit.

They returned to the camp, looted it and departed with their wounded as fast as they could go. During the finale engagement, Fred had taken to his heels, too, and put a safe distance between himself and the camp. After waiting an hour he cautiously returned to the camp, and found that the miners had come back and were attending to their wounded friends, only one of whom seemed likely to die. The miners, who received him with acclamation, said that most of the shots fired by the enemy had missed, largely owing to the fact that they were protected by the wall of the house. How many of the road agents had been hit no one could say, as the rascals had carried their unfortunate comrades off with them.

"Well, I wounded three of them to my knowledge," said Fred, as he described the part he had taken in the skirmish.

Fred was glad to find that Baxter had not been hurt beyond a couple of slight flesh wounds that he laughed at. After taking a bite to eat Baxter decided to go on at once to the next camp and sound the warning that the road agents were in the gold fields, and Fred was quite ready to accompany him. They followed the wide beaten path used by the wagon that went the rounds of the camps once a week collecting the gold dust and nuggets that the miners consigned to the banks in Blackpool.

About four o'clock they reached the camp they had headed for. It was the smallest one in the diggings, and was worked by only eight men.

The tents were grouped along the side of the wooded ravine where the miners were excavating the soil—only surface or placer mining being carried on in the fields, but to the surprise of Baxter there was no sign of life there.

They soon had evidence that the road agents had been there before them.

They found the eight miners gagged and bound, each to a separate tree.

They were quickly released and told how they had been taken by surprise and easily overpowered.

The stock of dust and nuggets was appropriated by the road agents, who then departed.

Baxter and Fred remained till dark, and after supper hastened to reach the next camp a couple of miles away.

CHAPTER XIII.

Taking Refuge from the Storm.

Baxter and Fred remained all night at the camp, which they found had not been molested by the road agents, and in the morning continued on their way to spread the news about Redlaw.

They did not visit all the camps en route, as other miners were detailed to help on the good work.

Baxter ascertained that the treasure wagon was somewhere along the western section of the fields, so he and Fred made all haste in that direction.

On the third afternoon of their trip the sky became overcast and the weather looked threatening as sundown drew near.

"There's a storm coming on," said Baxter, with an anxious look at the murky sky. "I hope we'll be able to reach shelter before it breaks."

As the moments passed the sun, which they could not see, set and darkness came on rapidly after that.

The storm also advanced quickly on them, and it looked as if they were surely in for it.

"I see a light yonder," said Fred, suddenly.

"Where?" asked Baxter, eagerly.

Fred pointed to the glow in the distance.

"Must be a house, for we're still miles from the camp. Well, any port in a storm they say, so we'll stop there and ask for shelter."

In the course of fifteen minutes they reached the house, which was quite a fair-sized, two-story wooden dwelling, setting back about a hundred yards from the road.

Baxter pounded on the front door, which was presently opened by an elderly man of mild aspect.

"Good evening, my friend," said the miner. "My young friend and myself are bound for the Aurora mining camp, but we'll never be able to reach it ahead of the storm that's coming up at racehorse speed. So we thought we'd stop here and ask for shelter till it passes over."

"Certainly," said the man. "Take your horses around to the back, where one of my men will take charge of them and see that they're housed and fed. You have arrived just in time for supper, and I shall be pleased to have you both enjoy such fare as we have on the table."

Five minutes later Baxter and Fred entered the house by a rear door, and were there met by the owner of the place who introduced them to his wife and family.

The family consisted of two buxom daughters of thirteen and fifteen years respectively.

The visitors learned that the owner's name was Hoskins, and that he was a stock raiser.

He had been living in that place a matter of ten years.

"I should think it would be lonesome for you and your daughters, Mrs. Hoskins," said Fred. "You are quite a distance from the nearest town."

"Oh, we are used to it," smiled the lady. "My daughters and I often drive over to Maidstone, eighteen miles from here, where I have a sister who is married to the cashier of the bank. We always remain overnight and drive back next day unless we have some special shopping to do. We have arranged to make a trip to-morrow."

"I think I would postpone your trip, ma'am," spoke up Baxter.

"Why so?" she asked in some surprise.

"Because there is a possibility of your running foul of Redlaw and his road agents who are somewhere in the fields at this moment."

"Redlaw!" exclaimed Mr. Hoskins. "Why, I've just been reading in the papers about his depredations on the east side of the island."

"Well, he's changed his stampin' grounds to this section within a week."

Mrs. Hoskins and her daughters were much perturbed over the advent of the road agents in that locality.

"Better hide everything of value you have,

ma'am, so they can't get at it, until the rascals are driven out of the field," said Baxter.

"This is certainly serious news you've brought us," said the stock raiser.

"I'll allow that it is," admitted the miner.

"It is probably fortunate for us that you stopped here, otherwise we might not have learned that the fellows are so near us."

"Well, I don't know that you need worry particularly, for the scoundrels are more interested in looting the camps and layin' for the treasure wagon than anythin' else."

While they were talking and eating the storm came rushing up and was presently making Rome howl outside.

Supper over Baxter and Fred accompanied Mr. Hoskins to a room where smoking was permitted, and the miner got out his pipe and so did the owner.

"You don't smoke a pipe," he said to Fred.

"No, sir."

"I can offer you a cigar."

"Thank you, but I don't smoke at all."

The two men smoked and talked while Fred listened.

The storm continued to rage outside with unabated fury.

"You won't be able to go on your way-tonight," said the stock raiser. "I can offer you a couple of beds just as well as not, and after breakfast you can resume your journey to the Aurora camp."

"I'd like to get there to-night," said Baxter, "but I suppose we'll have to accept your offer. The road will be rather miry for a few hours after this downpour."

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Hoskins. "You have several streams to cross and they'll be swollen to twice or thrice their usual size."

So it was arranged that the visitors should stay.

As soon as the lady of the house and her daughters had finished their work Fred was invited into the sitting-room, where he was subsequently followed by Baxter and their host.

By that time the worst of the storm had passed over without doing any damage.

The girls proved to be expert musicians on the violin and guitar, and they entertained the guests with numerous selections on those instruments.

They also sang very pleasingly, and altogether Fred and the miner felt that they had been well entertained when Mr. Hoskins announced that he was ready to show them to their rooms on the floor above.

There were two beds in the room, and so each of the visitors had one to himself.

As they were retiring Fred glanced out of the window and saw the moon struggling to push its way through the rapidly moving clouds.

The storm was over and the next morning might be counted on as sure to be fine.

Fred hadn't been in bed five minutes before he was sound asleep, and Baxter was in the land of dreams a few minutes later.

Several hours passed and two in the morning came around without any change in the condition of affairs.

Then it was that Fred suddenly awoke and sat bolt upright.

This was something unusual for him, as it was very rarely that his slumbers were disturbed.

It happened, however, that his sleep had been visited by an ugly dream.

He thought he was once more in Redlaw's power, and that he was about to be hanged on one of the trees in the woods through which he and Baxter had passed.

The dream had been so vivid that the efforts he made to escape his fate awoke him.

"I'm mighty glad that was only a dream," he muttered, as he started to lie down to resume his interrupted slumber.

Then his ears caught a strange sound at the window.

Glancing over at it he saw a man's head slowly rise above the sill outside.

Whatever might happen Fred resolved to give this rascal a surprise.

He reached out to the chair where his clothes lay upon which he had laid his revolver and securing the weapon cocked it and awaited further action on the part of the intruder.

The man looked in and glanced all around the room before he made any attempt to get in.

Satisfied that the coast was clear he threw one leg over the sill and was in the act of getting in when Fred took aim and fired at him point blank.

CHAPTER XIV.—Attack on the Treasure Wagon

The man uttered a wild cry, clapped his hand to his breast and tumbled out of the window. The report of the revolver awoke Baxter instantly and he sat up as Fred, with the smoking revolver in his hand, ran over to the window to look out.

The room smelled of burned powder and the miner asked what was the matter.

"I shot somebody who was trying to get in at the window," replied the boy.

Baxter jumped out of bed and followed him to the window.

As Fred appeared at the window a rifle outside cracked and a ball whizzed past his head.

The shooting had by this time aroused the house, and Hoskins and his family, recalling the news of the presence of the road agents in the neighborhood were thrown into a state of consternation, believing that the house was being attacked.

It happened that before retiring the stock raiser had told his three hired hands about the Redlaw band and had bidden them be prepared for an emergency.

The men slept in the upper floor of the barn close to the house, and they were provided with rifles and revolvers.

The wind of the ball caused Fred to jump back out of sight.

"The house is attacked," he said to Baxter.

"Then we must help defend it," answered the miner. "Keep watch till I get into my clothes, and when you have done the same we'll see if we can't give the rascals a warm reception."

Fred took a guarded look from behind the curtains and saw six men in the yard, all armed with guns.

Three of the men advanced and raising the man Fred had shot carried him away to where the boy saw a bunch of horses.

Then the rascals came back with a stout piece

of wood, the top railing of the fence, and proceeded to batter the door down.

At the first blow a shot was fired through the door and one of the men staggered back with a cry and an imprecation.

Then Fred and the miner opened fire on them from above.

The other three began to return the fire and bullets pattered around Fred and Baxter.

At that moment the three hired men got busy from the window of the barn and two more of the rascals dropped.

The warmth of the reception they were getting staggered the remaining three uninjured men, and they gave up the fight, making a rush for their horses, leaving the wounded men to take care of themselves.

There was a clattering of hoofs and the attack was over.

Fred and Baxter hastened downstairs, and found their host unbarring the door.

Mr. Hoskins, his guests and the hired men issued simultaneously into the yard.

All of the attacking party had vanished save two who were too badly hurt to be able to mount their horses.

They were captured and brought into the kitchen.

From their appearance there seemed to be no doubt about their connection with Redlaw.

Mr. Hoskins, who was something of an amateur surgeon, treated their hurts, but one of them had a ball in his body, and he looked as if he would die before morning.

Although all danger appeared to be over, Mrs. Hoskins and her daughter declared that they wouldn't sleep another wink that night, and they didn't.

Fred explained how he had woke up and caught one of the bunch in the act of getting in at the window, and had shot him without taking the trouble to inquire into his motive, as it seemed to be sufficiently unlawful on its face.

After the excitement had subsided Fred and Baxter returned to bed and were not disturbed during the rest of the night.

In the morning the man who had the bullet in him, which he received from the rifle of one of the hired men, was dead, while the other was so far gone that there was little prospect of his recovering.

After a good breakfast the miner and Fred took their leave of the stock raiser and his family, receiving Mr. and Mrs. Hoskins' grateful thanks for the assistance they had rendered in defense of the house, and a warm invitation to call again when they were in the neighborhood.

They then mounted their horses and proceeded on their way to Aurora camp where they duly arrived.

They found that the camp had been attacked by the road agents the night before, but the miners, after a lively scrimmage, had beaten them off.

Baxter and Fred did not remain long at the Aurora camp.

The treasure wagon was only a matter of twenty-four hours ahead of them, and as it could only proceed at a slow rate through this part of the country, and had quite a number of camps to visit, Baxter calculated that by hard riding and

taking a short cut they might be able to overtake it by dark.

"We'll let the other camps go," he said "and try for the wagon. It ought to be well loaded with dust by this time, and would make a fine haul for the Redlaw band."

The miner, fortunately, was well acquainted with the entire gold fields, having been over it on a prospecting tour, and he knew of paths through the hills that would be of great advantage to them in saving time.

For miles they followed a grassless, rocky path, covered in some places with scrubs, and at other places by tall, rigid trees.

They rested in a meager kind of wood for dinner, which only partially sheltered them, and as soon as they had eaten they resumed their way.

"We'll strike the road in fifteen minutes, and then we may begin to look for the treasure wagon," said Baxter.

The miner's calculation was correct, and inside of the stated time they were galloping along the road once more.

Suddenly they heard the crack of a rifle in the near distance.

Then more shots followed in quick succession.

The sounds came from around a turn in the road.

"By heavens!" exclaimed Baxter. "I wouldn't be surprised but we are close upon the wagon, and that it has been ambushed by those rascals. We must hurry and help our friends out."

They dashed forward at a swift pace and soon came in sight of the scene of trouble.

It was the treasure wagon, sure enough.

It was standing in the middle of the road, unable to proceed, as two of the four horses had been shot down.

The vehicle was surrounded by a score of yelling ruffians, shooting at the guard inside, who were returning the fire with considerable effect.

"Yell like fury and then begin shootin'," said Baxter to Fred. "That'll give 'em an idea reinforcements are comin' and they may haul off."

The two began to shout as they dashed on the enemies, and soon the cracks of their rifles echoed sharply on the evening air.

CHAPTER XV.—Abandoned to a Terrible Fate.

As Baxter and Fred dashed down on the attacking party the road agents were somewhat disconcerted and began to retreat.

Redlaw, however, was not disposed to lose his golden prize without a struggle, and his eagle eye perceiving that the oncoming party only numbered two persons quickly rallied his party and resumed the attack.

Four of the ruffians were deployed in the rear of the wagon to meet and cut off Baxter and Fred.

The miner and his young companion were close upon the wagon, the defenders of which were encouraged by the sounds of approaching help, when the road agents who were in their path began firing rapid at them.

The bullets flew thick around Baxter and the boy, but in the excitement of the moment neither minded them a bit.

They shot down two of the men opposing them and dashed up alongside the wagon.

Then it was that Redlaw recognized Fred in the gathering gloom.

With a deep imprecation he raised his rifle and fired at the boy.

His intention was to put a ball through his head.

As he was a crack shot and the distance was short he probably would have ended the lad's young career then and there had not another bullet hit Fred's horse at the moment.

The animal stumbled and fell and Fred was pitched forward over his head into the road, where he lay quite stunned. The fight continued with more desperate zeal on the part of the road agents, and they finally overcame the defenders, killing or badly wounding nearly all of them.

Baxter was stunned by a ball which raised a bloody furrow across his forehead and he lay like one dead in the road not far from the unconscious Fred. The fight over the rascals took possession of their prize, loaded their dead and wounded into it and prepared to leave the spot.

The dead and wounded defenders were pitched into the road, there to lie till found by persons coming along that way later on. As soon as all was ready for their departure, Redlaw went over to the spot where Fred lay to see if he really was dead. Turning him over he perceived that the boy was only stunned. Drawing his revolver he placed it against the boy's temple, intending to blow his brains out. Poor Fred never dreamed afterward how close to death he was at that moment. As Redlaw was in the act of pulling the trigger a sudden thought occurred to him, and smiling grimly, he uncocked his weapon, returned it to his pocket, and, calling one of his men, ordered him to throw the boy into the wagon.

This was done, and then Redlaw gave the order to proceed, leading the way himself up through a rugged part of the hills. It was dark, but for that they had plenty of light to enable them to proceed, for the sky was brilliant with myriads of stars. In the course of two hours of slow traveling they reached a glen surrounded by rocks and trees, and close to a swollen torrent that rolled over a precipitous ledge of stone, and thundered down into an abyss below. Further progress by the wagon was impossible. Redlaw had brought it here to abandon it after leisurely looting it of its valuable freight. He had lost so many of his band in the fights of the few days he had been scouring the gold fields that he decided to retire from the district with his spoils before the constabulary came upon the scene.

One of the band's secret hiding-places was about a hundred miles from that spot, and Redlaw calculated that by a forced march they would be able to reach it quickly and in safety. After coming to a halt Redlaw ordered a hasty meal to be prepared. While this was under way the captain had Fred lifted out of the wagon and brought to where he was standing. The boy had just recovered consciousness, and was staggered to find that he was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy. The presence of the treasure wagon also told him that Redlaw had won the fight in the road, and he wondered how matters fared with the defenders, particularly in respect of Bud Bax-

ter, with whom he had struck up a warm friendship.

Then he remembered the dream he had had at the Hoskins' house, and wondered if, after all, he was about to see his finish. Redlaw did not leave him long in doubt respecting his intentions toward him.

"So we have met again, young man," he said, with a dark look. "This time, I fancy, you'll get your quietus. You are a long way from the road and all chance of a rescue. I might have blown your brains out an hour ago, but I have reserved you for a different fate."

"So you intend to do me up?" replied Fred. "Well, I can't help myself. I am in your power, and you have shown yourself to be coward enough for 'most anything."

"You whelp!" roared the road agent, stepping forward and striking the boy a blow in the face that stretched him dazed on the ground. "How dare you talk to me that way? I have killed more than one man for less. Here, lift him up," he said to one of his men. "Fetch a piece of rope from the wagon," he said to another.

Then he walked to the edge of the torrent and looked at the trees lining its foaming brink. He selected a huge tree that hung over the chasm.

"Bind him to that tree so that he hangs over the fall," he ordered his men.

The men obeyed his order and tied Fred so that he could not possibly release himself.

"Now, young man, you are face to face with your fate," said Redlaw, grimly. "I am giving you a chance to prepare for death before it overtakes you. Your death will not be a violent one, and I shall not have your blood on hands. In this desolate spot you will be left to slowly starve to death. You might exhaust yourself crying for help, but you will not be heard, for no one ever comes here. Some day your dead body will be discovered by some chance prespector, but until then you will be a fixture for the sun to parboil, the rain to drench, and the wind to play at hide-and-seek through your clothes. How do you like the prospect?"

"Villain!" cried Fred, desperately. "It is what I might expect from you."

Redlaw laughed tauntingly, and turning on his heel left the spot.

For half an hour or so Fred heard the road agents talking and laughing over their night meal, then their exclamations of satisfaction reached his ears as they overhauled the bags of gold dust and nuggets the wagon contained. The spoil was loaded into the saddle bags, and when the last bag had been stowed away the captain ordered them to mount their horses, the wounded men being tied on led horses. The three dead ruffians were tossed into the torrent to be borne down into the chasm and whirled away into the depths of the wilderness. As soon as the band were ready to proceed Redlaw walked over to the spot where his victim was secured.

"I have come to wish you bon voyage on your journey to the next world," he said, maliciously. "My voice will be the last human one you will ever hear and it will be a satisfaction to me to know that you will remember it as long as you retain your consciousness. Have you any messeage to send to Hobart Town? Perhaps you would like

me to convey the news of your death to that young singer of the free-and-easy in whose defense you struck me the blow I have never forgiven, and which, more than anything else, is the reason why you are in your present position?"

"Scoundrel! I have no message that I would give to you to deliver. Go, I am sick of the sound of your voice. I may be only a boy but I can die like a man, and I'd scorn to accept my life from you at any price you could offer. Some day you will see your own finish, and take my word for it it will be worse than mine."

"Bah!" sneered the ruffian. "When I die the world will remember Redlaw."

"Yes; but how? With contempt and detestation. Go and leave me to my fate."

"I am going. Good-night and good-by—forever."

He strode away with a laugh and gave the order to his men to start. Fred heard the sound of the horses' hoofs on the rock as they took a path into the heart of the wilds. At length they died away altogether and he was alone in the solitude of the wildest section of Van Diemen's Land.

CHAPTER XVI.—The Treasure of Van Diemen's Land.

Fred Sinclair, when Redlaw and his band had left him, felt that he was, indeed, alone—alone with death. Alone in the awful solitude of untamed nature where, of all created beings, man is most helpless.

And he, surely the most helpless of all, thus deprived by the malevolence of a ruffian, or even the power of attempting to escape. The cords that tied him to the trunk of the tree were so arranged that he could scarcely move a limb. He could only turn his head from one side to another; his sight alone was unfettered, and this but gave him a fuller perception of the horrors of his situation.

The stillness of the place would have been complete but for the rushing torrent surging past beneath him. The awful gulf down which it plunged in foaming violence he could not pierce with his eyes in the gloom, but he judged it was of some depth. And so, surrounded by nature in her wildest garb, Fred passed the ensuing hours of darkness, a prey to the most dismal reflections.

As night wore away, clouds came up in the sky and blotted out the stars, and the wind came in cool blasts down the high hillsides. Soon it began to rain—first in light drops, then heavier as the storm grew apace, until it came down in sheets, soaking the helpless prisoner through and through and chilling him to the bone.

This seemed an added misfortune to his hard lot, yet it was really his salvation. For a long time the rain poured down in a sort of deluge, saturating the short grass and rugged rocks under Fred's feet. The stream increased in depth, and seemed as if it would overflow its banks. Over the steep rocks above him, into the chasm beneath, the torrent poured. Fred watched it with fascinated eye, while his clothes, dank and sodden, clung to his shivering frame and poured off streams of water. At length the rain stopped just

as the first signs of dawn appeared in the eastern sky, and the sky began to clear rapidly, with every promise of a fine day. Suddenly Fred became aware that he was no longer tightly fixed to the tree. By hours of soaking, equivalent to being immersed in water, the rope that held him to the tree had become limp and relaxed. A thrill of newly born hope filled his mind, as he started to take advantage of the fact. With hardly any exertion he was able to extricate both of his arms, but to free his body from the half a dozen coils was quite a different thing. Fortunately the boy had a stout knife in his pocket. He got it out, and while holding on to the trunk with one arm severed all but one of his bonds in short order. Then he worked himself around the trunk till he got a footing on the earth behind, when he cut the last tie that held him a prisoner.

"Thank heaven!" he said. "I am free at last. I shall yet cheat that scoundrel out of his revenge."

He staggered forward a few paces over the sodden ground, then sank down exhausted beside a ledge of rock that overhung the swollen stream. How long he remained in that condition he never knew. The sun rose in a clear sky and warmed his wet and chilled body. At length he opened his eyes and drew a long breath. He found that his gaze rested upon an opening in the rocks on a level with his face. The rays of the sun penetrating it glistened upon a heap of yellow coin that was escaping from a fracture in a cedar chest. Fred looked at it in great wonder, hardly believing his eyes. Finally, spurred to action by the glittering sight, he crawled up to the opening and looked in at close range.

"Gold!" he ejaculated. "A chest full of it. And they look like English sovereigns."

He thrust in his hand and drew out as many coins as he could grasp.

All thought of his precarious position in the wilds vanished. He was transported by the sight of the gold. He spent an hour fingering it and calculating the value of the contents of the box, which was so heavy that he could not move it. Then the thought came to him, how could he get it away? This was a serious matter truly. If he left it there would he be able to find the spot again? Some one else might come that way and secure it. The very idea made him feel desperate at the chance of losing this treasure which was now his. He got up and looked around. At that moment the neigh of a horse struck on his ears.

"Some one is coming," he breathed. "They must not see this gold or perhaps they will do me out of it. I must cover it up."

He strained his ears, but heard no further sounds.

"Where did that neigh come from?" he asked himself.

Walking forward into the glen he came in sight of a horse tied to a tree. It belonged to one of the dead road agents, and had been abandoned to starve up there in the wilds. Fred hailed the animal with a shout of joy. He rushed up to it delightedly, and the animal rubbed its nose against his arm, as if it recognized a deliverer and a friend.

Fred looked at the saddle bags and the problem of carrying away the treasure appeared to be solved. Looking into the bags he found several

days' rations of food. He was soon devouring a large share of it, and when he had satisfied his hunger somewhat he fed the horse sparingly. There were a pair of revolvers in the holsters that the boy greeted with great satisfaction. He also found a heavy hammer in one of the saddle bags. Taking it he returned to the hole where the treasure box lay concealed and with a few blows smashed in the side of the chest. A glittering stream of gold coin poured out. With an exultant heart he began transferring the money to the saddle bags.

As the sun set that afternoon Fred rode into a small mining camp about a mile from the place where the treasure wagon had been captured. Almost the first person he saw was Bud Baxter, with a bandage around his head. They greeted each other with great warmth, and Fred soon related to Baxter and the assembled miners the thrilling story of his experiences in the hands of the road agents, the fate Redlaw had consigned him to, and how he had escaped it. Then privately he told Baxter about the treasure he had found, and showed it to him. We have not space to tell how Fred got back to Hobart Town with his gold. After all it is immaterial, for he got there all right and deposited the money in one of the banks, the value of it footing up to £15,000 or nearly \$75,000. He afterward presented Baxter with £2,000 or \$10,000 for the assistance he gave him in getting back to town.

When he visited the offices of Lyndock & Lyndock, he was welcomed as one back from the dead, for Mr. Manners had returned with word that he had been captured and probably made away with by the road agents. Redlaw and his gang of ruffians did not escape with their spoils after all. They were surprised and captured by a large body of constabulary and brought to Hobart Town, where they were in due time tried and convicted of their many crimes. Redlaw and many of the others were hanged, while the rest were confined in prison for life. Fred took up his residence in Hobart Town and lived a life of ease until he reached his twenty-first year and came into legal possession of his farm. As soon as he did he deeded it as a free gift to the unfortunate wife of Redlaw, who had lived there as the caretaker right along. Then Fred married Ruby Ransom, whose mother had died a few months before, and sailed with her to California with a bank draft in his possession representing the treasure of Van Diemen's land.

Next week's issue will contain: "OLD MYSTERY' THE BROKER; OR, PLAYING A DARING GAME."

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Ninety Degrees South

or, Lost in the Land of Ice

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER VI

Caught in the Ice

Here the ice-cliffs seemed to meet the clouds, and then they were not more than fifty feet in height, but even at these places they could not be scaled and seemed to stretch away for miles.

Now and then they tried to force a passage, but merely succeeded in cutting their way through the looser ice, only to find it more solid beyond.

Captain Essex was determined not to be baffled by the barrier, and continued his cruise till at last one morning, after a strong south wind, he found himself surrounded by ice, but with a lane of water stretching away in front of him for a long distance.

They steamed ahead at full speed, passing great bergs of most fantastic shape, some looking like gigantic figures carved from the ice, others having the forms of huge animals, and still others seeming like towering steeples or great battlements frowning upon them from amid the dark waters.

Now and then great fields of floating ice extended before them, but the sharp prow of the Pioneer crushed through them like a knife through rotten wood, and their progress was uninterrupted.

Occasionally their way seemed entirely barred by some enormous berg, but they kept on and found a way around it, or entered a passage between two masses where the bergs seemed ready to crush them.

Now the lanes seemed scarcely wide enough to give them room to pass, it being easy to reach out and touch the cold walls, while again there was plenty of space on both sides.

All day long Captain Essex stood on the bridge, taking nourishment at intervals, but remaining at his post and obstinately refusing to leave it.

More than once it seemed as if there were no way out, but the keen eye of the intrepid commander always detected a means of escape, and they kept on, threading many devious ways, but maintaining a general southerly direction till night set in dark and threatening.

The Pioneer was fitted with many of the newest appliances, and when night set in a powerful searchlight was turned on from the bridge, and threw a wide path of brilliant white light in front of them.

Never before had these desolate wastes seen such a sight, and if there were any human beings in reach of the light, they must have wondered greatly at it, and looked upon it as a new kind of aurora, the like of which they had never seen.

The lights showed the bergs in front, and by it they were enabled to avoid many dangers which

might otherwise have threatened the destruction of the ship.

Captain Essex remained on the bridge until midnight, when all of a sudden they felt a shock go all through the vessel and the light went out.

"A berg was turned over," cried Phil. "I saw it fall just as the light went out."

The vessel rocked violently for a few moments and then seemed to rest upon an even keel, the propellers churning up the water astern without seeming to send them ahead.

Phil ran down into the engine-room, saw the chief engineer and said:

"What has happened? We don't seem to be moving."

"I know we are not. I have stopped the engines."

"Yes, but before that?"

"They were going so fast that I thought something must be the matter. Did you feel that shock?"

"Yes."

"I think we must have been caught in a cradle of ice."

"Is anything damaged?"

"Not that I can tell. We do not appear to have sprung a leak anywhere."

"What is the matter with the electric engine?"

"Something gave out and we stopped it."

"Then we are in no immediate danger?"

"Not that I can determine. Stay here till I make an investigation."

The ship seemed to be resting quietly, as if at anchor, and there was not the slightest motion.

The chief engineer returned in twenty minutes and reported that they seemed to be resting on a cradle of ice, that there was no great depth of water around them, but that it was so dark that they could not see ahead of them nor in any direction for more than a few yards; that it was intensely cold, although neither the moon nor the stars were out, and that the captain had at last consented to take a much needed rest.

"You can be sure that there is no immediate danger if Captain Essex is willing to go to sleep," said Phil, with a feeling of relief, "and so I think that those of us who can had better follow his example."

When daylight dawned they found the vessel surrounded by ice, some of which appeared to have been formed during the night, being smooth and very hard.

To the right and left of them stretched a plain of ice, broken here and there by masses in most fantastic shape, while in the distance arose huge bergs.

There was a dull, leaden sky above them, and the air seemed full of snow, the wind now and then blowing gusts of sharp particles like ice in their faces.

Ahead of them were smaller bergs, but whether they would find open water at any reasonable distance they could not determine.

The captain was on deck and, seeing Phil, said: "Mr. Freeman, would you like to go with Mr. Fenton to explore the ice ahead? We are sending out a party presently."

Phil wanted nothing better, and so, fortifying himself with a hearty breakfast and putting on some extra clothing, he was ready when the

party left the vessel by ladders let down over the side.

He and Dick were among the number, as were Mr. Willis, Waddles and, as the boy suddenly discovered when they had gone a considerable distance, Sadie Hunter.

"Why, you ought not to go, Sadie," he exclaimed.

"There are enough of you to take care of me."

"Nonsense. It is all you can do to look after yourself in such a place. I wish I had seen you before, and I would have sent you back."

"And now you can't," laughed Sadie.

After all, it was just as well that the girl had gone with them.

CHAPTER VII

How Sadie Helped

The exploring party proceeded for some little distance across the ice till they had passed that which had newly formed, and came to the hummocks.

Then they separated, Phil, Dick and Sadie keeping together, the professor being with two of the sailors, and Wills being by himself, the remainder of the party setting off in another direction.

Phil and Dick helped Sadie over the rough ice, but finally she sat on a hummock and said:

"I don't see how I'm going to look after Uncle Jerry if he goes wandering off in another direction, and you boys pick out the very worst road you can find."

"Never mind," answered Phil, "with a laugh. 'Sit here and wait for us. We'll just go ahead to that high berg yonder to see what we can see from here. We'll be back shortly.'"

"I may come after you," said the girl, "but I can't go so fast as you."

The boys set out alone and Sadie presently followed, although at a slower pace.

She soon saw them disappear around an angle of an enormous mass of ice which rose to a considerable height, and following, saw them enter an opening in front.

"They've gone into an ice cave," she muttered, sitting down behind a hummock so as to be out of the wind. "They won't care to stay there long, so I'll wait."

In a minute or so she heard footsteps on the other side of the hummock, and then heard the voice of Mr. Wills.

"I'd like to shut 'em up there," he muttered, and then he hurried on and she heard no more.

"Oh, you miserable wretch!" she cried, as she hurriedly arose and followed the man.

She saw him pause at the entrance to the ice cavern and begin to roll blocks of ice before it, as if to block the way.

Above the entrance was a huge block of ice which seemed to be sustained by a smaller one wedged in sidewise.

The man carried an iron-tipped staff to assist him in walking, and with this he now began prying at the wedge of ice as if to dislodge it.

It was beginning to crumble and seemed about to give way beneath the weight of the other,

when Sadie ran up, all out of breath, and cried:

"What are you doing? Don't you know that Phil and Dick are in the cave?"

"No! Is that so? This thing is dangerous, and I thought I had better get it down before it fell and crushed somebody."

"Didn't you know that the boys were in there?" asked Sadie, looking the man full in the face. "Didn't you want to shut them up?"

Wills laughed and then answered:

"What nonsense! What put that in your head? You women get strange fancies sometimes."

Sadie had more courage than discretion, and she answered, hotly:

"Didn't I hear you say that you would like to shut them up in this place? I was behind a hummock there when you passed and muttered to yourself. What did you want to shut them up for?"

Wills knew that he had been overheard, but he said as he struck his staff into the ice at his feet and gave a great laugh:

"Nonsense! You didn't hear me say anything of the sort, because I didn't say it. I saw you behind the hummock, but I have not seen the boys, and don't know where they are."

At that moment there was a sudden tearing sound, and Sadie sprang back as the great block of ice went crashing from its resting place and completely blocked the way in.

"There! Now you've done it!" cried the girl. "That's just what you wanted to do. Now you've shut the boys in."

"It's better to have that down than to have had it fall on their heads as they were coming out," said Willis. "It was no place to go in, anyhow, and they ought to have known it."

"There was be no other way out, and that block of ice has got to be cut away," said Sadie. "If you didn't know the boys were in there——"

"To be sure I didn't," said Willis. "How should I? It's all right. You don't know that there isn't a way out on the other side."

"No, I don't," said Sadie, and then, thinking it as well not to say any more on the subject, and seeing Mr. Fenton, the professor and two or three sailors approaching, she hurried toward them.

"She knows too much," muttered Wills, "and if she says too much as well, I'll be obliged to find a means of silencing her."

Wills followed and passed her, and as she came up she hear him say to Mr. Fenton:

"I have unwittingly shut the boys up in the berg yonder. There was a very dangerous block of ice just over the mouth of the opening, and I threw it down for fear it might fall on some one, not knowing that the boys had ventured inside."

Sadie said nothing, and Mr. Fenton said:

"It is quite likely that the opening goes through to the other side. That frequently happens. We can cut away the block, however, if you think there is no other way of getting out."

They went to the opening, and Mr. Fenton shouted to the boys to know if they were still inside.

In a few moments came the answer:

(To be continued.)

Fame and Fortune Weekly

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 2, 1927

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

CROWS BLACKEN SKIES

A vast flock of crows, flying in such dense formation that they darkened the skies over a large section of Ausaba Valley, were observed by scores of residents there recently.

The clamor made by the slow, flying birds was heard for miles, residents said. The oldest inhabitant is unable to recall so great a passage of birds.

945 SAVED WHEN LINER SANK OFF BRAZIL, CHECK-UP SHOWS

A total of 314 persons perished in the *Princesa Mafalda* disaster off the coast of Brazil, it was shown recently in final figures made public by the local office of the Navigazione Generale Italiana, owners of the vessel. There were 945 survivors.

The dead included 27 first class passengers, 37 second class, 204 third class, 37 sailors and 9 officers including Captain Guli. The survivors included 25 first class passengers, 55 second class, 623 third class, 11 officers and 231 members of the crew.

The ship's complete passenger and crew list numbered 1,259 persons.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN BLIZZARD MAROONS AUTO TRAVELERS

Huge snow drifts have blocked automobile traffic and stranded many travelers in camps near the Continental Divide in Wyoming. The Rockies have felt the fury of a three-day blizzard and the fast falling snow buried several abandoned automobiles.

About 200 auto travelers were reported stranded at Sherman Sill and Elk Mountain, two of the loftiest points in the Rocky Mountain range. Many others were marooned at Medicine Bow, Wyo.

ANTWERP FEARS LOSS OF DIAMOND CUTTERS

Inasmuch as the prosperity of Antwerp, Brussels, depends largely upon the diamond-cutting industry, the proposal of certain Antwerp diamond cutters to open a branch works in South Africa is being much commented upon in that city. Permission to do this was asked for last Autumn and the matter is now before the Parliament of South Africa.

Antwerp suffered much during the World War, when the majority of the cutters went to Holland, and it has taken measures since then to coax the greater part of them back to Belgium. As a result any attempt to induce them to emigrate to South Africa is not favorably regarded at the Belgian seaport.

It is pointed out that the Flemings, from which race most of the cutters come, easily change countries, and once abroad seldom return again except for short visits to their friends and families.

LAUGHS

PROBABLY

Teacher: And why did Methuselah live to such a ripe old age?

Blonde Child: Oh, probably just to spite some poor girl who'd married him for his money.

—*Chicago Phoenix*.

INTERESTING FACTS

No matter how hard you throw a snowball to the ground it doesn't bounce.

OUT WEST

"Did you know they are cultivating the Charleston fields out West?"

"Charleston fields?"

"Yes. Hay! Hay!"

—*Dartmouth Jack o'Lantern*.

A SHADY STORY

She: Tell me that story about the girl who bleached her hair.

It: I never tell girls off-color stories.

—*U. of S. Calif. Wampus*.

TO BE SURE

Prof.: Geraldine, what do you think of *The Comedy of Errors*?

Geraldine (brightly): I think that is one of Shakespeare's darlingest puns.

Prof. (frigidly): What do you mean when you say *pun*?

Geraldine: Why, professor, a pun is a play with words, isn't it?

—*Ollapod*.

Country Doctor' (superintendent of Sunday-school)—Now, children, who can tell me what we must do in order to get to heaven? Bright Boy—We must die. Country Doctor—Quite right, but what must we do before we die? Bright Boy—Get sick and send for you.

The Millionaire's Secret

The first few years of my professional life were spent in the village of C——, a thriving place about one hundred miles from New York City.

Among my patients in the village was one Mr. Reuben Barton, a gentleman who occupied a magnificent mansion, and had the reputation of being a millionaire.

Mr. Barton was a widower with one son, a young man of about twenty-five, whose profligacy was notorious, and was said to cause his father much unhappiness.

One December night, just as I was preparing to go to bed after a hard day's work, the sound of the door bell rang through the house.

With a muttered exclamation of impatience I went to the door and found one of Mr. Barton's servants.

"Dr. Graham," he said, "my master is very ill and wants to see you at once."

A man of Mr. Barton's importance could not be neglected by a struggling young physician like myself, and I accompanied the servant at once to the mansion.

I was ushered into the millionaire's room, where I found Walter Barton, the son, seated by the old gentleman's bedside.

The bloodshot eyes and haggard mien of the young man revealed to me the fact that he had just returned from one of his periodical sprees.

"I have been ailing for several days, doctor," said Mr. Barton, as I entered, "but thinking that it was nothing serious, I did not send for you. But tonight I feel so much worse than I have called you in. Doctor, I feel a presentiment that I shall never arise from this bed. If I am right I want you to tell me so."

A few inquiries and a very brief examination revealed to me the fact that Mr. Barton was indeed a dying man. A cold which he had contracted a few days before had brought out a disease which had been long lurking in his system, and which must inevitably cause his death ere many hours.

I told him the exact truth, and he took it very calmly.

"There is no hope, then, doctor?" he said.

"None."

After a pause he continued:

"Doctor, I wish to speak with you a few moments in private. Walter, I must ask you to leave the room."

With a look of sullen surprise, but without speaking, the young man arose and left the apartment, closing the door behind him.

"Doctor," said Reuben Barton, as soon as we were alone, "I have a confession, a terrible confession, to make. I make it to you because I know you to be a conscientious and upright man, and I am certain that you will see that justice is done."

"Upon yonder table you will find pen, ink and paper. Bring them to my bedside. That's it. Now, doctor, I will ask you to transcribe to paper the story which I am about to confide to you. Are you ready?"

"I am, Mr. Barton."

"Then listen. Twenty-five years ago I was a

clerk in the employ of my uncle, Mr. Stephen Denner, of New York. I depended for my daily bread upon my earnings, which were very scanty, for my uncle, though a wealthy merchant, was not a liberal man.

"Though poor, I had luxurious tastes which I longed to gratify. I chafed against the chains which bound me to a life of toil, and my one all-absorbing thought was to acquire wealth. But my prospects were anything but bright.

"At last there came an opportunity for me to possess myself of the riches I coveted, and I eagerly grasped it.

"One morning on his way to business my uncle fell as he was crossing Broadway, and before he could rise was run over by a heavily loaded wagon and fatally injured.

"He was conveyed to his residence, where, after lying two days in an insensible condition, he died.

"During those two days I matured and carried into effect the vile plot by which I possessed myself of his fortune.

"After his death, search was made for a will, and in a drawer in his desk one was found by which he disinherited his only son and left his entire property to me, his nephew.

"This will was a forgery. It was written by myself, and by me placed where it was found. I was very clever with my pen, and I was confident that the fraud would not be detected.

"And it was not. No one, not even the disinherited son, Henry Denner, suspected the truth, and the estate passed into my hands.

"It was not thought strange that the old gentleman made this disposition of his property, for his son was a notorious spendthrift and profligate, and had occasioned his father much unhappiness; while I, on the contrary, was supposed to be a very sober, steady young man.

"In reality, doctor, my uncle died intestate, and his property should have gone to his son Henry.

"This dreadful secret has rendered my life a torture for years, but I have been too cowardly to acknowledge it until this, my dying hour.

"Have you got my statement written in full?"

"Yes, Mr. Barton."

He had paused a number of times during his narrative in order to give me time to reduce the confession in writing.

"Very well. Justice must be done, and to you I leave the task of righting the fearful wrong. Do you accept it?"

"I do."

"Every penny of my money belongs to Henry Denner, who still lives, and is a poor clerk in a New York warehouse. Will you see that it is restored to him?"

"I will."

"Please touch the bell upon the table."

I did so and a servant entered.

"James," said the dying man, "I want you and Dr. Graham to witness my signature to this document."

And with a trembling hand he affixed his name to the confession.

"Thank God!" he cried, and with a deep sigh he fell back upon the pillow.

"Now, doctor," he continued, as he lay there with closed eyes, "put the paper in your pocket. To your care I confide it, trusting to you to produce it at the proper time."

For half an hour I remained at the bedside of the dying man. When I left him, to return to my home, I saw that he had but a few hours to live at the most.

As I left the room, Walter Barton emerged from the adjoining apartment.

His eyes met mine with a fierce, wild glare, and there was so strange an expression upon his face that, involuntarily, the thought occurred to me:

"That young man has been listening and has overheard his father's confession."

As I left the house and hurried along the lonely country road in the direction of my home, nearly a mile distant, the suspicion became almost a certainty.

If he had overheard the interview, was it not probable that he would follow me and endeavor to gain possession of the written statement which was hidden in my pocket?

If this confession was made public, Walter Barton would be a beggar.

I knew him to be a desperate and unscrupulous man, and the conviction forced itself upon me that if he had really overheard the confession, I was likely to have trouble with him that very night.

I removed the precious document from my breast pocket, where I had placed it, and concealed it in the lining of my hat.

This done, I assured myself that my Derringer was in its place, and walked briskly on.

I had traveled about two-thirds of the distance between Mr. Barton's house and my own, when I became conscious that I was being followed, and, suddenly turning, found myself face to face with Walter Barton.

I stood still, and so did he.

The light of the moon rendered the scene as bright as day.

For a moment we stood looking into each other's eyes.

Then Barton spoke.

"See here, Graham," he said, "I'll be plain with you. I overheard every word that passed between you and the old man, consequently I am aware of the contents of that paper in your pocket.

"My father is dead—he died almost before you had got out of the house—and no one knows of that confession except you and myself.

"I propose that we keep the secret, and I am willing to pay liberally for that document.

"See here, Mr. Graham, you need money—I know that. Now listen to my offer. Give me that confession and I'll pay you ten thousand dollars within one week. What do you say?"

"I say that you need waste no more words on this subject. The trust left to me by your dying father shall be faithfully carried out."

"Then, curse you, your folly shall cost you your life," and the villain sprang toward me.

"Stand off!" I cried, leveling my revolver at his head. "Approach at your peril!"

But he drew a knife and continued his onward course.

I pulled the trigger, but the weapon missed fire.

An instant later Barton had buried his knife in my bosom.

I sank to the ground, and in a few moments became insensible.

The last I remember is that Barton was bending over me, hurriedly searching in my pockets for the confession.

When I recovered consciousness I was lying in my bed at home, a brother physician bending over me.

"The confession!" I said, as soon as I opened my eyes. "What is the confession?"

"Hush!" said my companion gently. "You have been seriously injured, and must be perfectly quiet for several days."

"But," I persisted, "I can't be quiet; I can't rest until I am assured of the safety of that paper. Doctor, where is my hat?"

"Your hat!"

"Yes; please find it and bring it here at once."

"Here it is on the table, but what——"

"Look under the lining and see if you find a paper there."

He did as I requested.

"Why, yes," he exclaimed; "here is a paper."

"Thank goodness!" I cried fervently. "Now Dr. Allan, issue your orders and I'll obey them to the letter—that is, as soon as that document is safely locked up.

Well, reader, my story is nearly done.

In a few days I was on my feet again.

The knife of my would-be assassin had penetrated my breast about half an inch above the heart, inflicting a serious, but by no means dangerous wound.

When he left me, after examining the contents of all my pockets, and satisfying himself that the confession was not among them, Barton had supposed me dead.

DOG, BARKING, SAVES MAN IN QUICK-SANDS

The barking of a dog (a sort of pleading, rasping bark), got on the nerves of Christopher Bauer, a fisherman who used a shack on Deep Creek, Barren Island, recently. He had heard it intermittently all day. It had bothered him and once or twice he had made half-hearted attempts to find the animal.

About sundown Bauer could not stand it any more. He pulled on his high boots, took a flashlight and started to walk along the shores of Deep Creek.

Within a few moments he saw the dog outlined in the moonlight, half crouching, close to the creek and seemingly guarding something.

Deep Creek is frequently used by eel fishermen. At low tide it is muddy but safe. The rising water transfers it into a trap of quicksand.

Bauer, plodding toward the dog, noticed that the animal did not move as he approached. Then he saw the head and shoulders of a man. The head was dropping, the body motionless.

Bauer hurried back to the mainland and got Patrolman Patrick O'Shea of the Vanderveer Park police station. The two rowed back, piloted by the sharp barks of the dog. They reached the man and pulled him in. Then the dog leaped into the boat.

Once ashore the man, more dead than alive, was rushed to Kings County Hospital. He roused some during the trip to whisper "Dominick" and then fell back into his coma.

As for the dog, when the man was put into the ambulance the dog ran a few steps with it, then turned away and has not been seen since.

GOOD READING

REPORTS WIVES WASTE \$700,000,000 A YEAR

Housewives of the United States waste \$700,000,000 in foodstuffs annually it was shown in a survey completed by A. J. Nuthenrieth, of the Middle West Utilities Company which was made public recently. Mr. Authenrieth is vice-president of ice engineering for the company.

His figures showed that each family wasted about 10 cents worth of food daily by spoilage, or an equivalent of \$35 annually.

SEEK NASSAK DIAMOND TO ADORN RIVERA BATON

Overtures for the purchase of the Nassak diamond, weighing 78 $\frac{5}{8}$ carats, to adorn the baton to be presented to Primo de Rivera when he is made a marshal of Spain may prevent its sale in the United States, where it now is. Georges Mauboussin, a Paris jeweler, who obtained the diamond from the Duke of Westminster's collection and got it admitted to the United States duty free as a work of art more than 100 years old, said today that members of the Spanish committee had asked him to design a baton which would include the stone as a decoration.

PSYCHOLOGY FOOTNOTE

As a great city develops in its inhabitants certain instincts of alertness that are usually but embryonic in small communities, it inculcates vast patience, resignation and indifference. Late one afternoon recently, at one of the most congested Broadway corners in the Times Square district, an ungainly heap of large, ownerless partly crushed pasteboard boxes had been deposited in the middle of the sidewalk near the curb. There is sprawled. But pedestrians stolidly detoured, in their home-going hurry, and probably few asked themselves: "In what other town in the land could an obstruction so informal and so supremely inopportune be encountered?"

CALLS "DA DA" "GOO GOO" SENSIBLE BABY TALK

Baby is quite justified in using the words "da da" and "goo goo," most French experts agree, and there is no need to teach him—or her—academic pronunciation. The baby talk proponents, headed by Jules Veran, have marshaled a great mass of facts from the science of phonetics to show that babies do not have the vocal equipment necessary to make all the sounds mastered by adults. These experts explain that it is easier for a baby to sound T than C, Z and J, and, like practical little persons, they do the best they can to simplify long words by picking out a prominent syllable and repeating it. The experts conclude that small children must be allowed to talk their own language.

WATERING FISH IN THE WINDOW

Passing recently through a crosstown street not far from the Metropolitan Opera House, a pedestrian glancing at the store windows was startled to see an arm reach over the partition that separated a particular window from its store and

pour a rain of water from a garden watering can upon the place beneath.

Closer examination of the contents of the window showed them to be fresh fish of many varieties, laid out in colorful patterns of square and circle, with lobsters, both red and green, ornamenting the marine-life-scape. Clams, oysters in mounds, and scallops and shrimps in rosettes and curlicues completed the picture. All of these appetizing morsels are on an ice bed; and at least twice a day one may see the arm of the restaurateur reaching over with the watering pot to sprinkle his unusually window garden.

STANDING OF CLUBS IN PRO FOOTBALL LEAGUE

The standing of the National Football League clubs, including games played Sunday, November 6, follows:

Team.	Won.	Lost.	Tied	Pct.
Chicago Bears.....	5	0	1	1.000
New York Giants	6	1	1	.857
Green Bay	5	1	1	.833
Providence	4	2	1	.667
New York Yankees.....	4	3	0	.571
Cleveland	3	3	1	.500
Chicago Cards	2	3	1	.400
Pottsville	3	5	0	.375
Frankford (Pa.)	3	6	1	.333
Duluth	1	3	0	.250
Dayton	1	5	1	.167
Buffalo	0	5	0	.000

CHINESE CREW CALL EXPLOSION "GASOLINE DEVIL" AND MUTINY

Mutiny of a Chinese crew who believed that a "gasoline devil" had consumed their shipmates with fire was reported recently to the offices of the Standard Transportation Company in New York. The ship was forced to put back to Yokohama, and because of the continued rebelliousness of the Chinese a Japanese crew was engaged.

Connection between the disturbance on shipboard and the revolution in China was denied by officers of the company recently. But it has been noted by many captains that since China threw off the traces their hitherto meek Far Eastern crews have become a little less passive.

The row took place on the tanker Tecumseh, which carries the British flag, although it is operated by a company connected with the Standard Oil.

A Chinese pumpman was burned to death by the "gasoline devil," or, in plain English, by an explosion. The crew of 44 Chinese refused to permit a burial at sea for fear of reprisal by some devil or other from the sea or the oil. They demanded that Capt. N. MacDonald put back with the ship to Yokohama.

The captain, sniffing a mutiny, acceded, but balked when the crew demanded \$12,000 compensation for the family of the dead Chinese. So he chased them all off the ship, shipped half of them back to Shanghai and treated the rest as deserters. A Japanese crew was engaged and the voyage proceeded smoothly.

CURRENT NEWS

RACCOON DARKENS LONG ISLAND BY
PROWL IN LIVE WIRES

A raccoon which climbed the high tension wire structure outside the Northport plant of the Long Island Lighting Company recently electrocuted himself and plunged the whole of Suffolk County and part of Nassau into darkness for an hour.

Service could not be restored until the body of the animal had been removed. The raccoon measured thirty-three inches from tip to tip and weighed twelve pounds.

MOVE-UP DEMOBILIZES TRAFFIC COURT'S
A. E. F.

The "Old Buddy Triumvirate," of Traffic Court is no more. The compact, composed of Magistrate John B. Flood, Patrick Kelly and James Feisel, lieutenant, sergeant and corporal, respectively, in the old 69th Regiment during the World War, was broken recently with the promotion of Kelly to City Court, with an annual salary increase of \$500.

The trio, all of whom received citations during the war, have worked together in Traffic Court since their discharge from the regiment. It was Kelly's lot to call the prisoners' names, Magistrate Flood's to pass judgment on them and Feisel's to collect fines.

RUMANIA HONORS IRA N. MORRIS

Ira Nelson Morris, financier, of Chicago, was decorated recently by Prince Nicholas in behalf of the Regency with the Grand Cordon of the Star of Rumania. This honor was conferred upon him, as announced, for "services to Rumania and his never failing efforts to promote friendly relations between Rumania and the United States." This decoration is the highest within the gift of the crown.

\$200,000,000 SPENT YEARLY ON RESEARCH

Industrial corporations and the Federal Government spend about \$200,000,000 annually on industrial research. The corporations spent \$2 for every dollar spent by the Government. In 1921 only 578 companies maintained research laboratories, while more than 1,000 now have such auxiliaries. Seventy trade organizations also are spending \$15,000,000 annually in research, while 152 technical schools and colleges are spending about one-tenth that sum.

HORSES BECOME SAUSAGE TO MAKE
CHICKENS LAY

The "cayuse," the little Western horse that lives on bunch and other range grass, is being converted into dog biscuit and chicken feed to make hens lay.

"In most States local authorities are now permitted to round up and sell all unclaimed and untaxed horses, and efforts are being made, in many places, to rid the range of these animals," the Department of Agriculture says. This does not include the cow pony, for which no mechanical substitute has yet been found.

NOW, NOW, BE GOOD! THE JAILS ARE
JAMMED

Commissioner of Corrections Raymond F. C. Kieb announced recently that there are fully 1,000 more prisoners now than the State has cells to house. In the four prisons are about 5,000 prisoners. Clinton Prison, at Dannemora, has more than 1,600, Sing Sing more than 1,600, Auburn has 1,500 and Great Meadon Prison, at Comstock, 1,200.

"Where to put the inmates," said Commissioner Kieb, "is getting to be a difficult problem. We will have to do the best we can until the new Sing Sing cell houses are ready. Then we will have accommodations there for 1,200 more men. By that time we will need them and maybe more."

MAYOR ADDS BULLDOG TO RETINUE

When Mayor Walker held his regular audience with newspapermen recently he was accompanied by a new friend. His friend's name was Spike. Spike is a sturdy brindle English bulldog, whose happy disposition belies his belligerent looks. The Mayor had him on a leash, but he insisted upon running about the office and making the acquaintance of everyone present. Spike was presented to the Mayor a short time ago by his friend Harry H. Frazee.

Spike will take the place of the Mayor's old dog Bunk. Bunk died last year and was sincerely mourned by the Mayor and Mrs. Walker. Spike is seven months old and weighs forty-five pounds. He gave every indication of enjoying City Hall.

KERENSKY PREDICTS RUSSIAN WILL BE
DEMOCRACY AGAIN

The return of Russia to a democratic regime is predicted by Alexander Kerensky, leader of the revolution which destroyed Czarism, in a book just published in which Kerensky tells his own story of the revolution for the first time since his exile from Russia after his overthrow by the Bolsheviks. The book, entitled "Catastrophe," is published by D. Appleton & Co. coincident with the tenth anniversary of the Soviet government.

"Ten years have passed since the fall of the provisional government," said Kerensky, "but the aims of the Bolshevik dictatorship remain as irreconcilable as ever with the fundamental life interests of Russia. Social welfare, popular enlightenment, domestic order and international security will not be assured to the Russian people as long as the Bolsheviks continue to hold Russia in the grip of their party dictatorship. For no social order capable of guaranteeing to the people the blessings of work and freedom is possible in a country the people of which are deprived of fundamental human rights and civil liberties, of economic initiative and of the protection of law based and administered on the principle of equality.

"In the struggle for liberation Russia must inevitably return to the road of popular, national, democratic government, the road upon which the Russian people embarked—hesitatingly and with uncertain step—in March, 1917."

Fame and Fortune Weekly

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| 1130 The Little Operator; or, Cornering the "Bears" of Wall Street. | 1154 Phil, the Plunger, or; A Nervy Boy's Game of Chance. |
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